MBA Career Guide

A step-by-step roadmap to self-marketing for Smeal MBA internship and job search candidates
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ................................................................. iii

**Section One: Self-Exploration** ................................. 1
  - Assessments ...................................................... 2
  - Transferable Skills .......................................... 4
  - Passion .......................................................... 10
  - Prioritizing Your Values .................................. 12
  - Strengths ........................................................ 14
  - Ideal Work Preferences .................................... 14
  - Accomplishments ............................................ 16

**Section Two: Market Research** ................................. 23
  - Industries ...................................................... 24
  - Companies ..................................................... 25
  - Functional Areas ............................................. 26
  - Job Types ....................................................... 26
  - Methods of Researching .................................... 26

**Section Three: Focus** .................................................. 29
  - Degree of Difficulty ........................................ 30
  - SWOT Analysis ................................................. 30
  - Personal Visioning ............................................ 32
  - Develop Your Marketing Plan ............................... 33

**Section Four: Planning** ................................................ 37
  - Strategy Planning ........................................... 38
  - Resumes ........................................................ 39
  - Keywords ....................................................... 42
  - Your Branding Message ......................................... 44
  - References ....................................................... 44
  - Cover Letters .................................................... 45
  - SmealConnect ..................................................... 48

**Section Five: Implementation** ....................................... 49
  - Networking ...................................................... 50
  - Info Interviews ................................................ 59
  - Business Cards ................................................ 62
  - Social Media ....................................................... 63
  - Alumni ............................................................. 66
  - Dress for Success .............................................. 67
  - Career Fairs ....................................................... 69
  - Info Sessions ...................................................... 69
  - Job Applications ............................................... 71
  - Interviewing ....................................................... 72
  - Case Interviews ................................................ 80
  - Negotiation ....................................................... 81

**Section Six: Career Management** ............................... 87
  - Making Your Internship a Success ......................... 88
  - Maximizing Your First 90 Days ............................. 88

**Conclusion** ................................................................. 91
Developing a Personal Career Strategy (PCS)
Introduction

Obtaining the job or internship you want is a journey. It begins very early in the fall recruiting cycle. This guide is designed to help you chart your course and map your course of action. Use this guide to:

- determine your assets and marketable talents
- develop a vision and focus for what you want and where you want to go
- craft competitive marketing and branding materials
- apply proven career management methods and strategies
- prepare for and conduct networking and employment interviews
- negotiate win-win compensation offers

This guide utilizes our PCS (Personal Career Strategy) framework. Consider it your process map. Every phase from Self-Exploration, Market Research, Focus, Planning and Implementation provides exercises, tools, templates, resources and “best practices” advice to help ensure your success in seeking jobs and internships. This guide doesn’t conclude with landing that next job or internship but also provides guidance on making the most of your internship or the first 90 days in your new job. Good luck and enjoy the journey.

To change one’s life: Start immediately. Do it flamboyantly.
— WILLIAM JAMES
“The unexamined life is not worth living,” declared Socrates. Can you verbalize what's really important to you? And what your strengths, passions and convictions are? Of the six sections in the career guide, this one is the foundation, the spring-board that launches you into all the rest. If you skip it or gloss over it, you'll likely find yourself coming back at a later point, so it's best to do the work up front. We've included exercises for your inner archeology journey.

It is a sad fate for a man to die too well-known to everyone else and still unknown to himself.

—SIR FRANCIS BACON
Assessments

Assessments are a handy way to access a facet of what makes you unique. They can also provide language to describe yourself, which will be valuable when you reach the point of creating your marketing materials. Career Services is pleased to offer several assessments for MBA students.

CareerLeader® is designed to:

- Provide expert assessments of one’s unique pattern of business-relevant interests, motivators and skills
- Match an individual to specific business-related careers when compared to a database of hundreds of thousands of business professionals
- Help one understand what organizational cultures will be the best fit for them

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® is a personality assessment. Its purpose is to make the theory of psychological types described by C. G. Jung understandable and useful in people’s lives. The essence of the theory is that much seemingly random variation in behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the way individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment.

Please complete the following exercise sheets to capture the results of your CareerLeader and MBTI assessments.

**CAREERLEADER ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

For each section, list your top 3 results and their scores:

**My Interests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Activity</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**My Motivators**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are.*

—MALCOLM FORBES
### My Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comparison Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power and Influence Skills</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comparison Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis &amp; Strategic Decision-Making</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comparison Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bringing Management Structure</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Comparison Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key Skills

List your skills with comparison scores of 90% and greater:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Comparison Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### My Career Match

List your top 6-8 scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Culture Match
List the four categories and your result level for each:
___________________________________________  _______
___________________________________________  _______
___________________________________________  _______
___________________________________________  _______

MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR® ASSESSMENT RESULTS
List the four letters that make up your results for the type preference pairs: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling and Judging-Perceiving.

____  ______  ______  ______
E-I  S-N  T-F  J-P

Transferable Skills
Skills can be thought of as currency in the work environment. As when embarking on a project, it’s good to know how much and what kind of money you have, so let’s start by identifying your skills. These are the abilities you have developed from experience or accomplishments in work, volunteer activities, school projects etc. They are transportable and can be used in many different work environments that you may encounter.

Put a check next to the left of skills you have used and then check on the right for those at which you were particularly skilled and/or really enjoyed doing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative</th>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___Scheduling/handling logistics</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Efficient with paperwork</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Cutting through red tape to achieve goals</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Coordinating diverse elements</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___Sense of color, shape, design</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Conceiving visual representations of ideas/concepts</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Envisioning finished product</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___Speaking/Presenting</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Writing</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Training</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Coaching</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Mentoring</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Negotiating</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Mediation</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Creative
- Conceiving/generating ideas
- Recognizing new applications for ideas and things
- Ability to see beyond old methods, systems and processes
- Synthesizing and combining ideas into a coherent whole

### Interpersonal Skills
- Active listening
- Developing rapport
- Demonstrating empathy
- Conflict resolution

### Leadership
- A person of vision
- Identifying opportunities
- Motivating or inspiring others
- Making difficult decisions
- Sound judgment in emergencies
- Turning negative into positive situations
- Recognizing performance of others
- Responsible for success/failure of operation

### Organizing
- Organizing events
- Organizing people
- Organizing processes
- Organizing systems

### Planning
- Setting attainable goals
- Determining priorities
- Accurately assessing available resources
- Scheduling
- Time management
- Developing contingency plans
- Showing attention to detail
### Problem-Solving Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bringing order to a chaotic situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining root causes of a problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting the most effective solution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvising under stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping a group identify solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying calm in emergencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing how to find information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separating important from unimportant information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing large amounts of data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing surveys/questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying cause/effect relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using statistical data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teamwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team-building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration toward a goal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling comfortable with diverse groups of people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being tactful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team player</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Analytical eg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Computer Skills eg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Financial eg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Technological eg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now make a list of the top five skills you would like to use again:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good At</th>
<th>Like Doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SKILLS FROM MY PAST EXPERIENCE**

Complete the chart for work, volunteer and school projects to identify the skills you used and your ability and interest in them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Ability (5-high to 1-low)</th>
<th>Interest (5-high to 1-low)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer/Extra-Curricular</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Ability (5-high to 1-low)</th>
<th>Interest (5-high to 1-low)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.

—ALDOUS HUXLEY
Passion

It’s much easier to display enthusiasm when you feel natural passion for a topic or endeavor. Following are some questions to get you thinking about topics, activities and ideas that are exciting to you.

To what sections of a book store are you most drawn if you have time to browse?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

To what magazines do you subscribe or to which do you gravitate to reading when you have a choice?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

To what associations or clubs do you belong?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

What are frequent topics of conversation among you and your friends?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

What activities are you doing when you find yourself in “Flow” such that you lose track of time?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

When you’re energized at work and feel you’re making a contribution, what tasks are you doing?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________
To what charities are you inclined to give financial contributions?

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

Which social causes make your blood boil such that you think, “That should be different!”

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

What classes did you most enjoy in undergraduate and graduate school?

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

What websites are bookmarked on your computer?

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

On which blog sites do you most frequently comment?

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________ 

Where do you see themes/threads throughout the answers you’ve given above?

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

*To thine own self be true.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Prioritizing Your Values

Each of us has values that we hold dear. However, it can be easy to overlook these when making crucial life choices such as choosing between two job offers, unless we’ve identified them objectively beforehand. Based on the following scale, put a number next to each of the values listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not important at all</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Outcomes**
- Prestige (status in society)
- Recognition (being acknowledged for accomplishments)
- Advancement (opportunity to get promoted)
- Security (job stability and loyalty)
- Success (achievement)
- Professional development (growth in expertise)
- Helping others (helping people or benefiting society)

**TOTAL**

**Personal Lifestyle**
- Wealth (salary, benefits, perks beyond basic needs)
- Family (spending adequate time with relatives)
- Community (having access to friends or support system)
- Location (urban or rural, near ocean or mountains, etc.)
- Leisure (adequate personal time, vacations, weekends etc.)
- Health (impact job has on mental and physical health)
- Faith (opportunity to freely practice religious beliefs)
- Travel (the opportunity to see different places, cultures)
- Altruism (giving time/money to causes you support)

**TOTAL**

**Work Atmosphere**
- Affiliation (is it important for you to feel connected to your colleagues?)
- Flexibility (structured vs. ability to set your own hours)
- Teamwork (collaborating toward a common goal)
- Competitive environment (evaluation against your peers)
- Pay for performance (raises, bonuses, maybe even salary based on performance)
- Work pace (relaxed vs. hectic)
- Professional culture (formal vs. informal)
- Dress (formal vs. informal)
- Self-expression (ok to voice a dissenting opinion)
- Friends (do you have someone you consider a personal friend at work?)

**TOTAL**

**Individual Work Role**
- External contact (client-facing vs. internal-facing role)
- Variety (doing different things at work, changing frequently)
- Creativity (creating and applying new ideas)
- Independence (freedom to do things your way on your time)
- Power (to have authority and influence over what happens)
- Enjoyment (the degree to which you enjoy your job)
- Integrity (your behavior is consistent with your beliefs)
- Intellectual challenge (your mind is stimulated by your work)
- Leadership (the chance to lead other people directly or indirectly)

**TOTAL**
Which category seems to hold the most importance for you? __________________________________________

Regardless of category, list the 10 values with the highest scores:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Now, from the 10 above, choose and rank order your top 5 values. To narrow the list, ask yourself, “If I had to take away one value from this group, which one would it be?”

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

4. ___________________________________________________________________________________

5. ___________________________________________________________________________________

Ask yourself, does this list represent me accurately? __________________________________________

If not, what’s missing? __________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.
—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
Strengths

Having done some honest introspection, you’re now familiar with what you have to offer an employer and what you’re looking for in an organization.

What are your strengths? These could be key skills, experience, passions, values, personal characteristics.

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Ideal Work Preferences

Now is the time to dream! Make yourself comfortable and reflect on what you envision as your perfect work environment. Write it out here and use extra paper as needed. Recall what you valued in past work experiences to help design your ideal scenario. Describe location, organization type and size, relationships with coworkers, corporate culture, work-life balance, travel, dress code etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
OK, now we’ll break it into pieces and capture the highlights:

**Geography:** In what country, region, state or cities would you be willing to live?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Organization Type:** Do you work at a corporation? Association? Non-profit? Start-up? Or do free-lance?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Organization Size:** Would you prefer to work in a small (1-50 employees) medium (51 – 500 employees) or large (501+ employees) organization?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Travel:** Would you like to travel for work domestically? Internationally? and how often?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Relationship with boss:** Would you like a virtual relationship with your supervisor? Someone in the next cube with whom you meet every week? Lots of feedback or just one annual review? Etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Corporate Culture:** Would you prefer a formal culture and wearing suit and tie every day? A creative, laid-back environment with a flexible schedule? A flat organization where you could share ideas with the CEO? A green company where employees typically cycle to work and recycling is built into the system?

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________
Other factors important to me: Child care on site? Sabbatical leave every few years? Compressed work weeks eg. 4 nine-hour days and every other Friday off?

Accomplishments, your “Moments of Glory”

Unquestionably, the best way for a candidate to distinguish him or herself in the job market is with accomplishments. You’ve probably heard it said “past performance is the best predictor of future performance.” Accomplishment statements are examples of past performance. The mistake job seekers make when developing a resume is to fill their experience section with job duties, responsibilities or tasks. Accomplishments are not just what you did in a job but what you did well.

Accomplishments are your success stories; they are contributions to a team, deliverables to a project, projects you completed. Think of individual situations where you changed or improved a condition. Bernard Haldane called them your “good experiences” derived from times when you did something well, enjoyed doing it and are proud of the results.

EMPLOYERS BUYING MOTIVATORS

During the recruiting cycle, when speaking with recruiters, being armed with your accomplishments will appeal to an employer’s “buying motivators.” Employers are bottom line driven and results oriented. They want candidates to answer the W.I.I.F.M. question. Employers have five streams of interest: Money, Time, Customers, Problems, Workflow.

Let’s examine those a little closer:

Money
Have you improved sales volume?
Reduced operating expenses?
Trimmed budgets?
Identified obsolete inventory?
Renegotiated contracts?

Time
Have you reduced production time?
Decreased overtime?
Increased response time?
Improved delivery time?
Resolved downtime occurrences?

Problems
Have you reduced service calls?
Improved product or service quality scores?
Rejuvenated team morale?
Improved data accuracy?
Enhanced a company’s reputation?

Customers
Have you increased customer satisfaction?
Improved market share?
Repaired customer relations?
Developed new service offerings?
Attracted a new customer segment?

Workflow
Have you streamlined existing processes?
Consolidated redundant operations?
Reduced or eliminated paper reports?
Initiated quality controls?
Initiated process improvement initiatives?
ACHIEVEMENTS TOUCHSTONES

In the world of work, there are three undeniable touchstones that we come in contact with on a regular basis: Data, People, Things. As you begin to mine for your own accomplishments, let this chart help jog your memory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In your past, when you worked with Data, have you:</th>
<th>In your past, when you worked with People, have you:</th>
<th>In your past, when you worked with Things, have you:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzed</td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Assembled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembled</td>
<td>Assisted</td>
<td>Built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeted</td>
<td>Coached</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculated</td>
<td>Consuloted</td>
<td>Consolidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compiled</td>
<td>Counseled</td>
<td>Consolidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated</td>
<td>Delegated</td>
<td>Constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluated</td>
<td>Directed</td>
<td>Coordinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecasted</td>
<td>Managed</td>
<td>Coordinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecasted</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Coordinated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Persuaded</td>
<td>Represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Recruited</td>
<td>Represented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presented</td>
<td>Researched</td>
<td>Reorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Reorganized</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmed</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>u Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Reconsolidated</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Reorganized</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciled</td>
<td>Reorganized</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorganized</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesized</td>
<td>Researched</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mining for accomplishments

When mining your career past and work experience for accomplishments consider:

- past performance evaluations and annual reviews
- commendations from managers
- customers or clients
- recognition from team members
- participation on projects, committees and task forces
- honors and awards you earned
- milestones you reached
- goals you exceeded

Accomplishments Memory Joggers

If you are still struggling with uncovering and identifying accomplishments consider these memory joggers. Have you:

- Demonstrated leadership in a challenging situation?
- Accomplished more with the same/fewer resources?
- Helped a customer or co-worker solve a problem?
- Accomplished something for the first time?
- Improved a process or procedure?
- Developed, created, designed or invented something?
- Prepared original reports, manuals or procedures?
- Reorganized office or workplace systems?
- Saved the company money?
- Supervised, managed or trained employees?
- Increased sales?
- Identified problem(s) others did not see?
- Developed a new system?
- Implemented a solution to a wasteful procedure?
- Established safety record?
- Managed a budget successfully?
- Met company standards under unusual/difficult circumstances?
List your top 10 accomplishments:

1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________________________________
6. __________________________________________________________________________
7. __________________________________________________________________________
8. __________________________________________________________________________
9. __________________________________________________________________________
10. __________________________________________________________________________

Formulating accomplishments stories
The best accomplishments are specific examples of success; they are statements that demonstrate an ability to contribute to productivity or profitability. They answer the question “how did you do your work differently or better?” They are statements that highlight the value, benefits and contributions you bring to an organization. When formulating your accomplishments, use the STAR model to break down each aspect of an individual experience and to articulate a result.

FORMULATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS USING STARS

| ST | Describe the Situation or Task: |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |

| A  | Describe the Action(s) or intervention(s) you took: |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |

| R  | State the Results you achieved; quantify (%,$,#,time) when possible: |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
|    | ———————————————————————————— |
Combine the **Action** and **Results** to write a single accomplishment statement:

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Identified and contracted an outside vendor to manage customer letter fulfillment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>that achieved a cost savings of 33%.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Targeted and drove performance of promoted products to key account physicians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>growing market share 25% over a three-year period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTION VERBS BY SKILLS**

### Management/Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzed</td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Initiated</td>
<td>Prioritized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>Established</td>
<td>Instituted</td>
<td>Produced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converted</td>
<td>Executed</td>
<td>Led</td>
<td>Reorganized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated</td>
<td>Generated</td>
<td>Managed</td>
<td>Restored</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegated</td>
<td>Headed</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Streamlined</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Strengthened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed</td>
<td>Incorporated</td>
<td>Oversaw</td>
<td>Supervised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulated</td>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Interviewed</td>
<td>Presented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authored</td>
<td>Directed</td>
<td>Lectured</td>
<td>Proposed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated</td>
<td>Drafted</td>
<td>Marketed</td>
<td>Publicized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicated</td>
<td>Edited</td>
<td>Mediated</td>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
<td>Explained</td>
<td>Moderated</td>
<td>Synthesized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convinced</td>
<td>Formulated</td>
<td>Negotiated</td>
<td>Translated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponded</td>
<td>Influenced</td>
<td>Persuaded</td>
<td>Wrote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Financial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allocated</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>Developed</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzed</td>
<td>Budgeted</td>
<td>Estimated</td>
<td>Projected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraised</td>
<td>Calculated</td>
<td>Forecasted</td>
<td>Reconciled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessed</td>
<td>Computed</td>
<td>Managed</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audited</td>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>Researched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organizational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arranged</td>
<td>Coded</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogued</td>
<td>Collected</td>
<td>Monitored</td>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorized</td>
<td>Compiled</td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Systematized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charted</td>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td>Processed</td>
<td>Validated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified</td>
<td>Generated</td>
<td>Purchased</td>
<td>Verified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
De-constructing your Accomplishment:
Analyze your STAR information to identify the skills, personal traits and knowledge you used to achieve your results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transferable Skills</th>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>Subject Expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEYWORDS
In deconstructing your accomplishments, you achieved two self-marketing goals: you began the process of identifying your portfolio of skills, and you identified keywords.

A self-knowledge of your portfolio of skills: transferable skills, personal qualities and subject expertise will benefit you in articulating to recruiters your personal brand and showing your value from previous work experience.

In the online job or internship search, the keyword is….well, “keywords.” Keywords are nouns and noun phrases that describe you professionally. They are nouns generally associated with an industry, profession or job function. If you are going to post your resume to SmealConnect, job boards, or company websites, keywords are critical to gaining visibility.
Why is that accomplishment significant to you? What did it mean? Did you overcome tremendous challenges? Did you win against overwhelming odds? Did you demonstrate exceptional perseverance, inner strength, commitment? Did you stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone? Did you persuade doubters? How did it inspire you? What were the motivators, drivers, energizers? Did this accomplishment tap into a particular interest?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Congratulations on working through these exercises. Knowing these things about yourself will be invaluable when you Focus on matching your skills, values and passions and work preferences with what you will Research. Having clarity about your interests will also give you access to compiling a powerful branding message when you embark on Planning and impress recruiters that you know what you have to contribute when you Implement your job search strategy. Kudos on making the investment to dig deep in self-exploration early in the process. It will pay off later! When given several job options, you will know how to evaluate them by your already objectively-set criteria and choose well.

What Color is Your Parachute? by Richard Bowles
Do What You Are by Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger
StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath
Market Research

Now it’s time to find out what’s out there that may be of interest for your career. In this section, you’ll gain tools to research industries, companies, concentrations and job roles that are even vaguely appealing to you. The purpose is to cast a wide net and get informed on all possible options.

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.
—Benjamin Franklin
**Industries**

Which ones appeal to you? About which industries would you like to know more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accounting</th>
<th>Marketing Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising/Public Relations</td>
<td>Metals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerospace and Defense</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Mining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airlines and Aviation</td>
<td>Multimedia &amp; Graphics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel/Fashion</td>
<td>Nonprofit or not-for-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Oil &amp; Gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Entertainment</td>
<td>Packaging &amp; Containers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Management</td>
<td>Paper &amp; Paper Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Professional, Scientific, Technical Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>Property Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
<td>Publishing/Printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers/Office Equipment</td>
<td>Railroads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Installation</td>
<td>Real Estate, Rental or Leasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Services</td>
<td>Restaurant and Food Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Goods</td>
<td>Retail/Wholesale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Services</td>
<td>Science and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services</td>
<td>Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education or Training Services</td>
<td>Sports &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>Staffing &amp; Outsourcing Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm and Construction Machinery</td>
<td>Textile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Toys &amp; Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Transportation/Shipping or Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Beverage and Tobacco</td>
<td>Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Contractors</td>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (non-military)</td>
<td>Venture Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Wireless Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Managed Care (provider)</td>
<td>Other Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Furnishings &amp; Fixtures</td>
<td>Other Energy &amp; Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>Other Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel, Casino, Leisure, Travel</td>
<td>Other Health Care or Pharmaceutical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Services</td>
<td>Other Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Equipment &amp; Components</td>
<td>Other Products and Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology Services</td>
<td>Other High Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Other Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Affairs/Diplomacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet and/or E-commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Banking or Brokerage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Companies
Which companies would you like to explore further? Prioritize your industry choices. Choose 50 firms!

Industry #1:
Companies: ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Industry #2:
Companies: ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Industry #3:
Companies: ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Industry #4:
Companies: ____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
**Functional Areas**

About which functions would you like to know more? eg. Finance, Marketing, Sales, Supply Chain Management, Human Resources, Sustainability, Change Management, Corporate Law, Policy Compliance, Security, IT etc.

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

**Job Types**

If you’re interested in Marketing, you’ll ultimately need to narrow it down to marketing research or marketing strategy, so it’s worth investigating both now. In Finance, options may include corporate finance; investment, commercial or retail banking; private wealth management; accounting; auditing; mergers & acquisitions etc.

**Function:**  ______________________________________
**Potential Roles:**  ______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

**Function:**  ______________________________________
**Potential Roles:**  ______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

___________________________________________  _______________________________________

**Methods of Researching**

Online databases, informational interviews with people, and personal experience are primary methods for researching.

**ONLINE DATABASES**

Penn State offers its students a vast array of online databases for research. During Orientation, first years will attend a rich session with a reference librarian to gain exposure to these resources, which can be accessed online remotely. We list a few here for easy reference:

- **Business Library:** The Business Library has many business specific information and data resources which will be useful in both your career management and your academic pursuits. Our advice is to become very familiar with these resources and the business reference librarians.

- **Hoovers:** Hoover’s, Inc., delivers comprehensive company, industry, and market intelligence that drives growth of 12 million companies.

- **Lexis Nexis:** Great research tool for news, business and legal resource.

- **O*NET:** An interactive application for exploring and searching occupations.

- **Penn State Career Services:** A service of Penn State’s Division of Student Services, the website provides a variety of career assistance and guidance tools, including university-wide career fairs.
**Standard & Poor’s NetAdvantage:** An online resource that acts as a one stop for extensive company information.

**Vault:** The single most-used MBA career information resource. Job seekers and professionals use Vault to obtain inside company information, advice, and career management services. Vault Career Guides provide information for an in-depth understanding of industries and careers.

**WetFeet Inc.:** A recruitment solutions provider that helps corporations to more effectively attract, screen, hire, and retain the right people. The most comprehensive resource from WetFeet is the WetFeet Insiders Guides — free downloadable guides in .pdf format.

**ADDITIONAL WEB RESOURCES**

**Job Hunters Bible:** This is the companion website to Richard Nelson Bolles’ bestselling book *What Color is Your Parachute?*

**Jobstar:** The “Career Guides for Everyone” link on the “Career Guides” menu provides information on fast-growing occupations, labor market conditions, hiring trends, online career tests, and more. The “Guides for Specific Careers” link leads to sites about specific careers.

**Occupational Outlook Handbook:** This annual publication profiles hundreds of occupations. The Handbook also links to information about the job market in each state.

**Link to Exchange:** [http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/option-analysis-and-decision-making/career-exploration-resources](http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/option-analysis-and-decision-making/career-exploration-resources)

**INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

In spite of its vast quantities, information available online is limited in certain aspects. For example, most companies do not post their organization structures, reporting lines, dress codes, corporate culture, insider advice on getting promoted once hired etc. If you haven’t already worked there yourself, some things you can only learn through relationships with people employed there currently or in the (preferably recent) past.

In using the Career Guide, you’ll notice networking is mentioned many times. If you haven’t experienced this already, you’ll come to appreciate the benefits of networking in a wide variety of scenarios along the career planning and job search processes.

Please turn now to the networking section of Implementation, starting on page 50. There you will find tips on finding potential sources of information, reaching out to them with sample emails, another list of questions to ask, and advice on staying in touch as you build relationships with people in industry.

---

*Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.*

—MARGARET FULLER

---

Informational Interview Questions

Career Field or Industry
1. What are the various jobs available in this field?
2. In what ways is your occupation changing?
3. What are the growth areas of this field?
4. What parts of the country offer the best opportunities in this field?
5. What is the salary range for higher levels in this occupation?
6. Aside from such visible compensation as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc., what kinds of mental dividends (such as job satisfaction) does this career yield?
7. What do you find unique about your career field?
8. What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this industry?
9. When people leave this career, what are the usual reasons?
10. What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?

Company or organizational culture questions
11. What do you like most about this company?
12. How does your company differ from its competitors?
13. What is the company’s relationship with its customers?
14. What does the company do to contribute to its employees’ professional development?
15. What kinds of technology are important either for internal or external communications?
16. How would you describe the atmosphere at the company? Is it fairly formal or more laid-back and informal?
17. Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization and, if so, what is it? (Is it a people, service or product-oriented business?)
18. What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
19. Is there flexibility in work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
20. What kind of training program does the company offer? Is it highly structured or more informal?
21. How does the company evaluate your job performance?
22. How does the company recognize outstanding accomplishments of its employees?
23. What does the company do to foster innovation and creativity?

Company’s needs questions
24. In what areas do you perceive there to be gaps in personnel in this company? If the company had unlimited resources for creating new positions, in what areas should those positions be created?
25. In what areas do you see the company expanding? Do you foresee the opening of new markets or greater globalization? Do you predict development of new products and/or services? Building of new facilities?
26. What obstacles do you see getting in the way of the company’s profitability or growth?

EXPERIENCE
Clearly, working will give you first-hand information on what a particular area is like. Use the experience you have to help guide your questions about the fields you are exploring. Once you’ve gone through Focus and chosen an area to target for your internship, that role itself will serve as research about each element in an industry/company/function/role set. This experience will cycle into your next iteration of self-assessment that you can then apply to the full-time job search, as you continue to proactively manage your own career development.
Focus

When making a career transition for any reason, it is important to assess the degree of difficulty.

**Consider the Rule of Width:** “The wider the gap between your previous experience and your projected new career, the greater the degree of difficulty.” Changing both your industry and your work role presents the greatest challenge.

*You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.*

—THEODOR SEUSS GEISEL (DR. SEUSS)
What is your “Degree of Difficulty?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Same job</th>
<th>Similar job</th>
<th>Different job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different industry</td>
<td>Different industry</td>
<td>Different industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Same job</th>
<th>Similar job</th>
<th>Different job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar industry</td>
<td>Similar industry</td>
<td>Similar industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Same job</th>
<th>Similar job</th>
<th>Different job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same industry</td>
<td>Same industry</td>
<td>Same industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 50% of MBA students use their degree to change careers. Assess the reality of your transition. Anticipate that your transition will require more research, more networking, and greater focus.

**Consider the Rule of Passion.** “The greater the degree of interest, energy, enthusiasm and perseverance, with which one pursues a career transition the greater likelihood of success.” How badly do you want that new career? What obstacles will you remove or traverse in order to achieve it?

You have “looked inward” by conducting a thorough self-assessment; taken stock of your relevant work experience, skills, accomplishments, personal qualities and values. You have conducted market research to identify preferred industries, companies and job roles.

**SWOT Analysis**

Another process to help you gain focus and to set a realistic direction is to perform a SWOT Analysis. This tool will help you to examine your internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as, identify external opportunities and threats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th><strong>P O S I T I V E</strong></th>
<th><strong>N E G A T I V E</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- **Strengths**
  - What do you do well?
  - What job knowledge or industry expertise do you possess?
  - What skills align with your goals?
  - What personal traits give you a competitive advantage?

- **Weaknesses**
  - What do you need to improve?
  - What should you avoid?
  - What gaps exist in your qualifications?
  - What job search skills do you need to improve?
  - Could your professional network be improved?
Let the questions above guide you in performing your own SWOT analysis in the space below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P O S I T I V E</th>
<th>N E G A T I V E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Personal Visioning**

The next step in the process is to focus on your career goal; to define your vision. Vision could be defined as where interests (what you want) and abilities (what you have to offer) align with market opportunities.

To articulate your vision, consider the following criteria:

**Position/title**

(I want to be a: Consultant, Brand Manager, Financial Analyst, Project Manager, Supply Chain Manager, Logistics Analyst)

**Job scope**

(I would be performing: quantitative analysis, strategy development, process improvement, internal audits, event management, market research, product launches, forecasting, pricing strategy, vendor negotiations, client relations)

**Industry/ies**

(In the: Consumer Products, Pharmaceuticals, Financial Services, Healthcare, New Media, Commercial Banking, Transportation, Software industry)

**Company profile**

(My ideal company is: size of company, number of locations, Fortune 500, start-up, public/private, stable, profitable, turn-around, nonprofit, government)

**Location**

(Located: proximity to major metro area, distance from major airport, commute distance, regional preference)

**Compensation**

(I would like to earn: base salary, bonus, moving expenses, relocation allowance, tuition reimbursement)

**Company culture**

(My ideal company is: team-oriented, professional, innovative, participative management style, casual, hierarchical, diverse workforce, dress attire)

**Relationship with boss**

(My boss: provides frequent feedback, serves as a coach, mentor, manages from a distance, tolerates trial-and-error learning)

**Reporting relationship**

(My position on the organization chart is: reporting to C-level executives, Divisional VPs, Product VPs, Directors)

**Wins**

(What makes this work satisfying is: recognition, promotions, profit, philanthropic, company affiliation, public contact, competition)

**Projected next career step**
FORMULATE YOUR PERSONAL VISION STATEMENT
Using the criteria you developed from the Personal Visioning exercise, along with additional criteria important to you, develop your own vision statement. This will be very valuable during conversations with recruiters when they ask, “What are you looking for?”

___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

Develop your Marketing Plan
Just as a company creates a marketing plan to position a product or service to its target audience, you too are a collection of valuable products and services (skills, subject matter expertise, personal qualities, accomplishments) positioning yourself in the internship or job marketplace. Your Marketing Plan is a “one-pager” that crystallizes who you are from Self-Exploration and what you are looking for from Market Research and Focus. It is a concise document that “positions” you and “targets” your audience.
Marketing Plan Template

Name

Phone

email.com

Profile or Summary

This narrative section focuses the reader’s attention on the “professional you.” It identifies who you are and what you have to offer. It articulates your “branding message.” It draws attention to your background, experience and themes from your accomplishments. It conveys what you are known for or what you have a reputation for achieving. It also positions you by level. This section may also include special degrees, certifications and languages relevant to your targets.

Key Skills

These are typically your transferable skills, which are transportable from job to job, industry to industry. These are often natural abilities or talents expressed in nouns. Examples: problem resolution, analytical skills, critical thinking, leadership, communication.

Functional or Subject Matter Expertise

These are industry or job specific knowledge skills, acquired through education, training or on the job experience. Often called “tools of the trade” or Keywords, they are expressed in noun and noun phrases. Examples: P&L analysis, risk management, process improvement, Six Sigma, vendor sourcing, regulatory compliance, brand management, account development.

Personal Vision

A goal statement comprised of tangible and intangible elements of your ideal work preferences assessment. This statement includes desired job and organizational characteristics such as company size, corporate culture, reputation, values, industry, geography, commute, travel, job scope.

Target Positions

List your targeted positions by title or functional category.

**Target Industries or Market Segments**

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Target companies**

The key to completing this section is to cast a wide net to conduct your search. Begin with 30 to 50 companies that meet your criteria.

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Sample Marketing Plan

Susan S. Jones
(123) 222-3333  ssjones123@email.com

Profile
A marketing professional with broad operations background across direct marketing, domestic mass merchants and international wholesalers. Known for consistently meeting project deadlines by coordinating priorities and project plans. Experience managing direct mail campaigns, including list preparation, outreach/production, fulfillment and campaign reporting. Built and developed cross-functional teams that achieved results. MBA in Marketing.

Strengths
Team building and leadership, written and oral communication, relationship building, training and development, problem solving, budgeting, cost containment and negotiation.

Functional Expertise
Campaign strategy management, forecasting and analysis, database management, vendor negotiations, pricing strategy, purchasing, inventory and production, business systems planning, data center operations, order input and fulfillment management.

Personal Vision
Direct consumer; direct business to business, or direct campaign management company. Medium to large (1000 to 5000 employees) company. Located within 60 minute commute. Entrepreneurial environment with visibility and growth potential. Learning organization; casual environment.

Target Positions
Product/Account Manager, Marketing Manager, Operations Manager

Target Segments/Industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Mail Consumer, B2B</th>
<th>Catalog</th>
<th>Marketing Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Target Companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thomas U.S. Inc.</th>
<th>C.R. Gibson Co.</th>
<th>ADVO Systems Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Corporation of America</td>
<td>Seton Name Plate Company</td>
<td>Donnelley Marketing Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBI Inc.</td>
<td>The Srouse, Adler Co.</td>
<td>Clarion Marketing and Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danbury Mint</td>
<td>Weekly Reader</td>
<td>Direct Media Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tauton Press</td>
<td>Yale University Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We all have a finite amount of time to do all that needs to be done. While diving head first into online applications may seem like the way to go, in job search terms it actually may be the deceptively easy “path of least resistance” leading nowhere. In the long run, your time will be better spent if you invest it in planning at the start of your search, then follow-through with the plan and make adjustments as needed.

*It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste.*

—HENRY FORD
Strategy Planning
Developing a strategy is critical to your job or internship success. Your goal is to build an “interview pipeline.” Many candidates look for advertised jobs on the Internet, which seems like an obvious strategy. However, a large portion of jobs are unadvertised, filled by word-of-mouth or referral. Even when positions are advertised, a referral from a contact or alum can give a candidate an advantage over someone who is unknown. During the Market Research phase, you developed a list of target companies.

Your list of 30-50 target companies is the basis for developing a Proactive and Reactive search strategy. You can implement each strategy concurrently, but understand that the historic success ratio is widely different for each.

**Targeted companies**
- Proactive strategy
  - Unadvertised opportunities
  - Focused networking
  - Word-of-mouth referrals
  - Marketing Plan
  - Hiring manager controls process
  - 65-80% success

  Reactive strategy
  - Advertised openings
  - Apply online
  - One of 100-500 candidates
  - Resume
  - HR controls process
  - 15-20% success

**SOURCES OF HIRE**
In an annual survey of staffing leaders, conducted by CareerXRoads, employers were asked how they fill positions. Internal movement or transfer accounts for 41% of filled positions. However, of the positions filled by external hires, take a look at the following results:

- Referrals (employee, vendor, alumni) 28.0%
- Job Boards 20.1%
- Corporate career site 9.8%
- Recruiter sourcing 9.1%
- College events 6.6%
- Social Media 3.5%
- Career fairs 1.9%
MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR ONLINE SEARCH
When employing a reactive strategy, avoid posting a generic resume to job boards. As you will note from the image below, the more targeted your approach to specific jobs and the more you employ direct contacts the more productive your search results will be.

Network through a referral from LinkedIn contact or alumni
Contact hiring manager directly
Apply for specific job thorough corporate career site
Apply for specific job through job boards
Post untargeted resume to job boards

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.
—ALAN LAKEIN

Resumes

PURPOSE OF A RESUME
Resume writing is self-marketing — pure and simple. You have a product to sell — yourself — and you must create a resume that highlights both the features (skills) and benefits (achievements) of that product. Your resume’s primary purpose is to generate an interview for either an internship or full time offer. It is your sales tool, written to attract the reader’s attention and create a favorable impression within 15 seconds.

Quality resumes in the current job market must be focused on relevant skills and accomplishments and tailored to the types of jobs you are seeking. A “one size fits all” resume will not distinguish a candidate in a competitive market. Build your resume to appeal to a specific audience; a recruiter who is seeking a candidate to demonstrate the specific skills to perform in the target industry and function. Developing a market-ready resume requires answering two very important questions: who am I and where do I want to go?

The Self-Exploration exercises are designed to assist you in answering each of those questions. You have developed a “brand,” a compilation of skills, accomplishments, personal qualities and professional experience which answers the first question. You also uncovered passions and values. In the Focus phase you developed a Personal Vision statement.
**RESUME COMPONENTS**

*Heading or Contact Information*
- Name
- Phone number(s)
- Email address
- Current address (optional)

Avoid inappropriate email addresses. Use your PSU/Smeal email address. Do not use abbreviations but rather spell out Street, Avenue, Court, etc. This shows a strong attention to detail.

*Education*
Show education in reverse chronological order, with your Smeal MBA listed first followed by your anticipated degree date. It is not necessary to show community college or high school. Show your primary and secondary concentration(s), followed by your Graduate Assistantship or Teaching Assistantship (if applicable) followed by key memberships and associations.

*Professional Experience*
This section is the most important to recruiters. Show your past employers in reverse chronological order with your most recent first. Depending on the degree of previous experience, it is not necessary to list more than 10 years of prior professional experience.

All bulleted points in this section should begin with an action verb and should represent your previous achievements and accomplishments. As we addressed in Self-Exploration, use the STAR format to craft strong action + result statements. Quantify results with $, %, #, time wherever possible.

A recruiter will be reviewing this section for two important reasons: skills that are transferable to their industry or company and results that are translatable to their recruiting and business needs.

Although it might be easier, do not fall into the trap of loading this section with previous job tasks and responsibilities. These merely fill space but do not differentiate you from other candidates.

If you have more accomplishments for each employer than will fit into a one page format, consider creating a “master resume” which will contain all of your professional accomplishments. From this master list, select or “copy and paste” the accomplishments that best match the requirements for each position you seek.

*Skills*
You possess a portfolio of skills. You are a unique blend of transferable skills, functional or job related skills and personal qualities or traits. This unique combination becomes a component of your “personal brand” or “branding message.” A simple listing is appropriate and necessary for two reasons. These give the recruiter an idea of what you have to offer and the Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) a better chance of locating your resume in a database.

*Additional or Optional Headings*
Awards/Honors, Training/Professional Development, Professional Associations, Volunteer activities/Community Service, Publications, Certifications/Licenses
JOHN Q. COLLEGE
896 S. Allen Street
State College, PA 16803
(215) 555-1212
jqc121@psu.edu

EDUCATION
Penn State Smeal College of Business
Master of Business Administration
University Park, PA
• Primary Concentration: Product & Market Development
• President: MBA Consulting Association
• GPA: 3.9 / 4.0

Arizona State University
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
Tempe, AZ
1997 – 2001
• Recipient of Peter Thomas Service Award
• GPA: 3.6 / 4.0 (Graduate with Distinction)

EXPERIENCE
IBM
Intern, Marketing Research Group
Armonk, NY
7/11 – 9/11
• Co-managed product development and international procurement for a $25M product category; oversaw the development and launch of over 20 new product concepts.
• Supervised activities of cross-functional product team of 12 that included R&D, Engineering, Quality Assurance, Manufacturing, Marketing, and Procurement.
• Conducted feasibility studies to determine financial viability of new product proposals.

General Mills
Senior Logistics Analyst
Minneapolis, MN
1/06 – 7/11
• Designed new supply programs that generated cost savings in excess of $1.5M.
• Controlled budgets in excess of $20M; set standard costs and monitored performance against department targets.
• Created decision support models using pc-based spreadsheet and database software.
• Appointed team leader of supply chain group of 10 during implementation of SAP R/3 system.

Customer Service Coordinator
1/03 – 12/05
• Assured adequate inventory and customer service levels were maintained for largest sales region; coordinated with sales force on new product launches, deals and promotions.
• Co-designed improved Customer Service database, reducing order fulfillment errors by 27%.
• Forecast sales and related inventory requirements; planned stock levels, warehouse utilization, equipment usage, and staffing according to volume projections.

Warehouse Supervisor
7/01 – 12/02
• Planned distribution operations at three leased distribution facilities covering Western U.S.
• Suggested use of slip-sheets in place of pallets, resulting in $50K in annual cost savings.
• Negotiated contracts for logistical services; reduced operating budget by $350K.

SKILLS
Leadership, Analytical, Initiative, Communication, Process Improvement, Forecasting, Negotiation, Team building, Problem assessment, Strategic planning, Project management, Software: SAP, SPSS Languages: Fluent in English, and Mandarin

ACTIVITIES
Volunteer – Big Brother & Big Sister of Centre County, PA
9/09 – Present
Volunteer – Junior Achievement of Minneapolis
8/06 – 6/09
Keywords

The majority of Fortune 500 companies are employing Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software or Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to screen, sort and rank candidate resumes. In order to screen thousands of qualified candidates, an internal recruiter or hiring manager, using OCR or ATS software, will create search criteria, or keywords to select resumes from hundreds to thousands of candidates in a company’s database.

Keywords are words we use in our day-to-day work and academic life, but often take for granted. They are:

- **Transferable skills**: communication, leadership, planning, team building, mentoring, critical thinking, consulting, editing
- **Job specific skills**: financial analysis, internal audits, script writing, union relations, Sarbanes-Oxley, account management, risk assessment, GAAP
- **Technical skills**: SAP, systems architecture, programming, CAD/CAM
- **Software**: Excel, PowerPoint, Project Manager, Access, PhotoShop
- **Job titles**: VP Marketing, CFO, Director of Operations, Software Engineer
- **Personal qualities**: high-energy, visionary, results-oriented
- **Education/degree**: MBA, PhD, MS
- **Certifications/licenses**: CPA, MCSE, Series 7, RN, Series 65
- **Quality programs**: ISO 9000, TQM, Six Sigma, LEAN
- **Industry jargon**: Marcom, B2B, B2C, cradle-to-grave
- **Languages**: Spanish, German, Japanese, Mandarin

You already know many keywords through assessment tools and personality surveys. The best place, however, to find keywords is in job postings and position descriptions under the Qualifications or Requirements section. Look for descriptors in the job requisition that employers use to describe their ideal candidate. As long as they are truthful about you, create your own list. Open a new file in Word and call it Keywords. The list may contain 20 to 50 noun and noun phrases from the categories above.

Every resume that you submit electronically, either to a major job board or an employer’s corporate website MUST contain a Skills Summary. Your Skills Summary is a customized collection of those noun and noun phrases that match the requirements for the position for which you are applying, from your saved keyword list mentioned earlier. You merely create a string of words separated by commas. Your Skills Summary may contain as many as 10 to 15 word and word phrases. Here are some examples of how keywords are used in accomplishments statements and in a Skills Summary. (Bold for emphasis only.)

**KEYWORDS IN ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENTS**

- Developed and implemented communication plans to integrate eight international joint ventures/mergers, expanding the company’s cable business in key world markets.
- Received “Star Award” for highest ranked Senior Financial Data Consultant in country in 2010.
- Initiated and implemented an EDI system to facilitate electronic transfers, minimizing processing time, reconciliation time, and reducing cost by $150,000 in the first year.
- Implemented the integration plan for a Wireless WAN Service Installer acquisition in four weeks and 42.5% under budget.

*Fortune favors the prepared mind.*
—LUIS PASTEUR
**KEYWORDS IN A SKILLS SUMMARY**
Retail and Distribution Industries, Commodities Purchasing, Contract Administration, International Sourcing, Inventory Planning, Logistics Management, Proposal Review, Request for Proposal (RFP), Request for Quotation (RFQ), Vendor Partnerships, Vendor Quality Certification, Staff Training & Development, Relationship Management

**Resume Format and Presentation Guidelines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use white/ivory paper</td>
<td>Print on colored paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set minimum .75” borders</td>
<td>Overuse bold, italics, underline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantify results with %, $, #, time</td>
<td>“References Available Upon Request”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use 11 or 12 point font</td>
<td>Use “I,” “me,” “my,” “we”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print on 25% cotton bond paper</td>
<td>Use a resume template or wizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print on laser printer</td>
<td>Overuse “Responsible for”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use conservative font styles</td>
<td>Over describe experience in duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider a bulleted style to make your resume as reader-friendly as possible</td>
<td>Use unprofessional email addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize accomplishments (STARS)</td>
<td>Exceed 2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include contact info</td>
<td>Staple pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include email address</td>
<td>Use long paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include a Skills Summary</td>
<td>Use justified text blocks; they put odd little spaces between words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include a Technical Summary (if relevant)</td>
<td>List high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List your jobs in reverse chronological order</td>
<td>Include salary requirements or history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use past tense action verbs</td>
<td>Exceed 15 year career history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End bullet statements with periods</td>
<td>Include your height, weight, age, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, sex, ethnicity/race, health, social security number, reasons for leaving previous job(s), names of former supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell out numbers under ten</td>
<td>Include hobbies or other irrelevant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the numerical form for numbers over and including 10, unless they are the first words in a sentence</td>
<td>Include photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell out abbreviations unless they are unquestionably obvious</td>
<td>Lie, misstate education or dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include total years with company as well as years for each position</td>
<td>Inflate titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, AND PROOFREAD!</td>
<td>Use resume.doc filename</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check spelling, grammar, usage</td>
<td>Use your name resume.doc filename</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Keyword/Electronic and Word doc version</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use your name resume.doc filename</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Branding Message

Often referred to as a positioning statement, elevator speech or marketing message, a branding message is one of the most effective ways to communicate your brand. It also serves as your response to the “Tell me about yourself” question. With the exception of your resume, it is the most often used tool in your career management toolbox. Preparation is key and this template will help you “script” your basic message which you can then adapt to networking and interviewing scenarios.

My name is (name) and I’m currently a (MBA candidate at Smeal School of Business) with a concentration in (concentration).

Most recently I’ve been a (position/title/role) at (name of business or organization) where I (primary job function or work you performed), (primary job function or work you performed) and (primary job function). I am particularly proud of (state a notable or relevant accomplishment, project or assignment) where I (state outcome, result or deliverable).

My previous experience includes: (state a prior tenure with a company, military experience, notable volunteer experience, relevant education. It is not, however, necessary to state a chronology of all previous jobs).

I find that wherever I’ve worked or whatever role I’ve been in, I bring three key strengths to the table: strong (strength), excellent (strength) and an ability to (strength).

My goal is to obtain a internship/position in (functional area) within the (industry preference).

Craft your unique branding message:______

__________

__________

__________

__________

References

The further that you progress in the selection process, the more likely that you will be asked by a prospective employer to provide references. Your references can be a critical element in an employer’s decision making process, so choose your references wisely. When selecting your references consider:

• Former managers
• Former work associates or colleagues
• Previous customers, suppliers or vendors
• Direct reports or employees who you supervised

When developing your list of references, usually four to six, it is important to contact your prospective references first to obtain their permission and to verify their contact information. Let them know of your current situation, especially if you have not been in contact for a period of time, and tell them the companies and positions you are targeting.

After you have developed your market ready resume, send each reference a copy. This will equip them with your most recent work experience and relevant accomplishments. Contact your references again following every interview where an employer has requested your references. Give them advance notice about the company, type of position and who may be calling them.
Prepare a separate reference page that you can present to the interviewer during the interview process. Include the following information for each reference:

- Name of reference
- Position or title
- Company name
- Address
- Telephone number(s)
- Email address
- Relationship to you (e.g. former manager, former colleague)

**Cover Letters**

To send a resume without a cover letter is like meeting someone for the first time and not shaking their hand or serving a hamburger without a bun. It’s unusual and noticeably so. Always include a cover letter with a job application, unless the instructions specifically request that you not do so.

What is a cover letter?

An *individual* letter to a *specific* person for a *particular* reason with a *unique* message.

In a cover letter, recruiters are looking for the following: Is the page layout appealing? Does the candidate demonstrate knowledgeable interest in our company? Does this candidate have the potential to make or save money for us? Has he/she paid enough attention to detail to avoid any spelling or grammatical errors? Will this person fit in with the culture of the firm?

Here are some guidelines to follow in addressing the document’s visual appeal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readability</th>
<th>Formatting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Font style</td>
<td>Times New Roman or Arial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Font size</td>
<td>11-12 point font</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margins</td>
<td>1” nothing less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typeface</td>
<td>Consistent with resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact information heading</td>
<td>Consistent with resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact information heading</td>
<td>Consistent with resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td>No more than four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page length</td>
<td>One page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What should the cover letter say and how? On the following pages, you’ll see a cover letter template, guiding you as to the standard content of each paragraph in a cover letter. A sample cover letter will give you an idea of the flow. Please DO NOT copy the sample word-for-word or it will be obvious to recruiters that you have not invested the time to customize the letter. This is generally taken as a lack of sincere interest in the position and will be counter-productive to your efforts to land a job there!

*Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.*

—Henry Van Dyke
Date

Name
Title
Company name
Address
City, STATE Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. __________________:

The first paragraph:
Tell them why you are writing and how you heard about/where you found the job opening. Mention the name of the mutual acquaintance or person who referred you if that was the case. State the actual job title and Job Code # if one is listed in the posting. Say that you are a qualified candidate for the opening. (This paragraph should be no more than 3 sentences.)

The second paragraph:
Tell them what you know about the company or organization. Mention information that you know about the company’s growth, expansion, recent news or development. (This paragraph should be 3-4 sentences, depending on how much you know about the company.) This paragraph is optional if you couldn’t find much information about the company or are responding to a blind ad that does not reveal the company name.

The third paragraph:
Tell them how you are qualified for the job. Match your related experience, qualifications, accomplishments, education, or personal qualities to the position requirements. This can be accomplished in either a two column format using bullet points or in sections by using each requirement as a section heading. This paragraph should be no more than 5 sentences.)

The fourth paragraph:
Tell them how and when you will follow-up. Ask for an interview. Mention that you would like to schedule a convenient time to meet. If answering a blind ad, so you cannot call them, just end on an upbeat, cordial note and provide a telephone number where you can be reached. (This paragraph should be no more than 3 sentences.)

Sincerely,

Your name (signed)  Insert 5 spaces here in which to sign your name.

Your name (printed)
August 24, 2012

Ms. Julia Brown
Marketing Manager
Kimberly-Clark Corporation
24 Kimberly-Clark Drive
Neenah, WI 54957-2020

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing to apply for the Marketing Rotational Leadership Program internship opening this coming summer. I found the position, Job Code #3468, posted on Indeed.com. I am currently a first year MBA student at Penn State University’s Smeal College of Business, concentrating in Marketing, and am very keen on this opportunity.

In my independent research and through case studies explored in class, I have built on my life-long exposure to Kimberly-Clark’s well-respected products to deepen my knowledge of the company’s ambitious goals such as growing globally and becoming even more focused on understanding and targeting consumer needs with tailored marketing. Kimberly-Clark’s expanding integration of personalized advertising into its marketing portfolio aims to keep it ahead of the competition and that is an endeavor to which I would relish contributing my skills and knowledge.

My previous work experience managing marketing campaigns for two local PetSmart stores employed my skills in marketing analytics and target marketing to deliver sales increases of 15% over the time periods involved. Promoted in recognition for these results, I then led a team of three junior market analysts to further our impact and name recognition by partnering with community organizations to help raise $50,000 for a pet shelter in the area. In addition to these professional experiences, my recent MBA classes have further expanded my Marketing skill set that I anticipate investing heavily to benefit Kimberly-Clark in the next rotational program.

I look forward to setting a time to speak with you soon to further explore how my skills can meet your team’s needs. I will give you a call late next week to schedule a convenient time, unless I hear from you first.

Thanks in advance,

Jeremiah Z. Smith

Jeremiah Z. Smith
**SmealConnect** (formerly Symplicity)

SmealConnect is the online system through which employers can post internship and full-time opportunities for Smeal MBA candidates. During Orientation, you will be given instructions on how to log into the system, create a simple profile, and upload your resume. Do this within a few days, as employers start to come to campus a week or two after Orientation and prefer to look at uploaded resumes before arriving.

Important Note: While SmealConnect has the advantage of being used by recruiters already in relationship with the Smeal MBA program and therefore generally favorably disposed to our students, every year some students make an enormous mistake in choosing to use only SmealConnect in their job search. *This is a very poor job search tactic and could significantly delay your finding a position*. Instead, consider SmealConnect as it was intended — as one of many tools available to you in the search process. Also build into your strategy the use of the extensive Job Search Engines list posted on the Exchange.

Pathway: Home > Career > Planning > Job Search Tools > Job Search Engines  
Link: http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/planning/job-search-tools-1/job-search-engines
Implementation

Now it’s time to find out what’s out there that may be of interest for your career. In this section, you’ll gain tools to research industries, companies, concentrations and job roles that are even vaguely appealing to you. The purpose is to cast a wide net and get informed on all possible options.

The world has the habit of making room for the man whose actions show that he knows where he is going.
—NAPOLEON HILL
Networking

Networking plays an enormous role in a well-executed job search. For all the technological tools and job search boards available today, an effective job search is still based fundamentally on building relationships. In this section, we will share our recommended approach to networking and then walk you through the development of marketing materials you will need to prepare before finding and meeting with contacts. We’ll also give helpful hints on reaching out, meeting with contacts and leading info interviews.

What is networking? How, where and why do it?

**WHAT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Networking is:</th>
<th>Networking is NOT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>Manipulating others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a support system</td>
<td>Keeping score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining information, advice, referrals</td>
<td>Obligating others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing along information, ideas, contacts</td>
<td>Putting people on the spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking people for a job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WHY**

**Benefits of Networking**

- **Relationships:**
  - Forming relationships with industry/functional experts
  - Gaining employee referrals to companies for the application process
- **Information:**
  - Learning about companies, industries, jobs
  - Hearing about job openings before they are posted
- **Advice:** Gaining advice from those “in the know”
- **Direction:** Narrowing a job search from general to specific
- **Practice:** Get experience marketing yourself before going to interviews

**WHO**

We all have layers of contacts in our lives and are probably already connected to more people than we realize. The idea is to become aware of your network (Tier A,) familiarize your contacts with what you’re seeking and then tap their contacts (Tier B) for informational interviews to connect with employees and ultimately hiring managers (Tier C) at your target firms.

---

**Tier C:** Decision Makers & Hiring Managers

**Tier B:** People who serve as a bridge to the firm

**Tier A:** Your primary network
Who are your “Tier A” contacts? Brainstorm them in the following streams and use the examples as triggers.

**FAMILY** eg. parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, distant relatives etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**EDUCATION** eg. current classmates (1st and 2nd Years,) former classmates (graduate, undergraduate, high school,) faculty/staff, parents of classmates, alumni, student associations, guest speakers etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**BUSINESS** eg. former co-workers, current/former employers, former customers/clients, professional associations etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**SOCIAL** eg. friends, friends of the family, acquaintances at the gym etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**SPIRITUAL** eg. church, synagogue, mosque, temple etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**COMMUNITY** eg. volunteer organization, civic center, political party etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________
**SERVICE PROVIDERS** eg. Physicians/dentists, hairdressers, handymen etc.

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

**OTHER:**
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

**OTHER:**
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

**HOW**
There are two ways you could think about networking. The first is an OUT ➤ IN approach, in that you start more broadly and then generate contacts who will introduce you to others as you step through layers of networking connections to arrive at your target firm(s.)

**OUT ➤ IN approach:**

- Reach out to people you know to let them know you’re in a job search.
- Share the type of industry, company and role you’re seeking.
- Ask for contact info of anyone they know who is working or at all related to that area, as well as for referrals to anyone they know who knows lots of people.
- Contact those people to request info interviews, using the networking tools covered here.

The second approach is an **IN ➤ OUT approach**, where you start with a specific company from your marketing plan’s target list, with the goal of ultimately reaching at least one hiring manager in the department where you want to work.

**IN ➤ OUT approach:**

- Use LinkedIn to find individuals at your target companies. (See Social Media section.)
- Reach out to mutual contacts between you and employee to get that person’s contact info.
- Reach out to the employee to request an info interview.
- Conduct info interviews.
- You will be simultaneously seeking contacts in many companies as you go down your target list.

You may find it strategic to use both approaches to maximize your results.
Several tools are available to facilitate your reaching out to potential contacts for informational interviews or to make specific requests.

**Networking Tools**
- Marketing plan
- Branding message
- Approach letters
- Telephone scripts
- Business cards
- Tracking system
- Social Media
- Alumni Databases

Since you learned about and completed your marketing plan in “Focus” and your branding message in “Planning,” we’ll now address each of the others and give you some guidelines to launch your efforts.

**APPROACH LETTERS**

Many students have questions about what to say when reaching out to contacts and hesitate because they are fearful of making a bad impression. After reading this section and doing the necessary preparation, you are sure to come across as professional and have many successful networking interactions.

A word of warning: no one likes to be asked for a job, so don’t ask! People are naturally inclined to help others and want to say “Yes” to requests. When you ask for a job in the first correspondence, it puts your contacts in a difficult position. Quite often, the firm may not be recruiting at that time and even if the company has a current opening, they may not be the hiring manager. Plus, they don’t know you at this point, so it’s presumptuous to ask.

Make the goal of your outreach to gain an informational interview. This is an opportunity to learn more about the company and establish a relationship with the contact. It could be done face-to-face, on the phone or via Skype. It is best to schedule a time so you are both free and focused on the conversation.

Following are sample letters to get you started. Please do not copy them exactly, but demonstrate your own best communication skills to introduce yourself. You will probably be reaching out via email most frequently, but in the case you have only a street address, a version of a professional letter has been included as well.

> Opportunities multiply as they are seized.
> —SUN TZU
**Cold Contact Letter Template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Addressee (or First Name, if appropriate):

As a Smeal College of Business MBA Candidate at Penn State University, I am beginning to examine career alternatives where I can capitalize on my unique blend of experience in the (name of industry) arena and (industry). I am drawn to (Company Name) and the (name) unit in your organization. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss your view of my background, and to gain your insight on directions I might pursue.

My professional background and accomplishments include:

- Grounding in financial services and commercial real estate
- Skilled in financial analyses and valuation of new business opportunities
- Knowledgeable of all tax implications and financial impacts of commercial real estate transactions
- Strength in identifying new business opportunities and developing new business from existing client relationships

My current availability is:

Mon. Aug. 27: 1 – 4pm
Tue. Aug. 28: 10am – 1pm
Wed. Aug. 29: 3 – 5pm
Thurs. Aug. 30: 1 – 4pm
Fri. Aug. 31: 8am – 5pm

Please let me know what time is most convenient for you. I won’t take more than 30 minutes of your time and I can be available by phone or Skype. I certainly would value your input as to my background and your view of opportunities that I might pursue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks in advance,

Your name (signed)  
*Insert 5 spaces here in which to sign your name.*

Your name (printed)
Referral #1: Email Sample

Subject: Referred by Jesse Jones: MBA Katrina Wilkerdorf requests info interview

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I was referred to you by Jesse Jones, a Penn State Smeal College of Business alumnus. I am a first year MBA candidate seeking internship opportunities. We were discussing my search strategy, and he suggested that I contact you.

I realize you may not have a current opening that would match my consulting background in the Oil & Gas industry. However, Jesse did mention you have an excellent feel for the local market. Your insight on that front, as well as any feedback on my resume, would be invaluable as I formulate my search strategy.

I would greatly appreciate 30 minutes to meet with you. I am happy to come to your offices or meet at a local coffee shop if that is more convenient. I will contact you in the next few days to discuss potential meeting times.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Katrina Wilkerdorf

Katrina Wilkerdorf
President, MBA Consulting Association
MBA Class of 2014
kxw7352@psu.edu
814-555-9934
Referral #2: Letter Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Home: 303-222-2222</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1234 Main Street</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:email@aol.com">email@aol.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City, State Zip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms.______________:

(Referral name), whom I know through the Penn State Alumni Association, recommended that I contact you. She/he felt that your experience and knowledge could be most helpful to me at this time.

I am a Smeal College of Business MBA candidate actively engaged in an internship search. I am taking the opportunity to explore targeted industries and speak to business professionals to gain advice, insights and recommendations.

(Referral name) did not suggest, nor would I expect you to know of any specific positions. I would, however, be grateful for any advice you can give me about potential opportunities in the industry as a whole.

My background includes:

- Effective management of multiple systems support activities;
- Development of technical staff in support of business operations;
- Help Desk; LAN/WAN; Operations; and Applications Support.

I would be interested to hear your view on how my background might fit into your industry. I hope it will be possible for us to meet in person, otherwise I can be available via phone or Skype. My current availability is:

Mon. Aug. 27: 1 – 4pm
Tue. Aug. 28: 10am – 1pm
Wed. Aug. 29: 3 – 5pm
Thurs. Aug. 30: 1 – 4pm
Fri. Aug. 31: 8am – 5pm

Sincerely,

Your name (signed)

**Insert 5 spaces here in which to sign your name.**

Your name (printed)
TELEPHONE SCRIPTS
When would you need to call someone to initiate a relationship? A call could be a follow-up to an initial email if you have not heard back after a week or two. The referral name is very important to your success. People enjoy giving advice and are complimented when it is sought. Also, most people do not want to disappoint an associate who has suggested them as a credible contact. Often they will try to help you as a favor to their friend or associate — your referral. Be pleasant, brief, and focused — and be sure to use the referral name to successfully achieve your goal of getting a face-to-face visit. Prepare your own conversation guides. Write down what you will say, and time and practice it until you sound unscripted and natural.

Write down your objective (e.g., get an appointment, advice, contacts or information.) Mentally monitor your speaking time and remember to balance the conversation by asking the listener questions. Personalize your presentation by using the listener’s name and insert jargon unique to his or her industry.

Example 1: “Good morning, (name of person you are calling). My name is (your name) and I’m currently an MBA candidate at the Smeal College of Business at Penn State University. I met with (Referral Name) who suggested that I talk with you because your advice would be a good resource during my current search for an internship. Am I calling at a good time?”

“I am talking with people who have extensive knowledge about connections in financial services organizations, which is why you were recommended to me. What I’d like to do is set up an appointment to hear your reactions to what I’ve been doing and what I’m thinking of doing in the future. Would your schedule allow us to meet for 30 minutes next week?”

Example 2: “(Name of person you are calling,) our mutual friend, (referral name,) suggested I call you. He thought you’d be a good person for me to contact to get advice regarding my career objectives. He did not suggest that you had work for me or even knew of any open positions.”

“I’ve developed a plan that is aimed at the consumer package goods industry, as I’m pursuing an internship this summer. (Referral Name) said you could provide insight into that field, and that you might be willing to give me your opinion on my marketing strategy. Could we spend 20 to 30 minutes together sometime next week?”

A cold call could be valuable when you do not have a contact at a target company and are looking for one. This would involve researching the company’s general phone number, or preferably the specific location of the office you want. Call and ask to speak with the title of the person you have in mind eg. Marketing Manager for Pringles or Director of Finance for Asia. Depending on company policy and the friendliness of the receptionist, you may be transferred to that person or department. If you reach voice mail, listen carefully and make a note of their name so you can use it in addressing them. Good luck!

STEPS IN NETWORKING
Here are some steps to take in networking:
1. Build out your Marketing Plan, if not yet done. Refer to Focus Section.
2. Develop and reach out to your “A team” of contacts.
3. Draft your basic approach letter/emails that you can tailor to the individual.
4. Practice your telephone scripts, while smiling!
5. Formulate a base list of questions to ask in info interviews.
6. Practice your Branding Message out loud.
7. Send out your approach emails and start info interviews.
**NETWORK CONTACT TRACKER**

You may find it helpful to organize your contacts into a chart or list to keep track of them. In addition to an organizing system, some people find it crucial to integrate their follow-ups into their calendars so they fill an actual spot in time. Experiment and go with the format/process that works for you.

Here is a sample chart to get you started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Sent email &amp; TQ note?</th>
<th>Meeting or Call Date</th>
<th>Referred By</th>
<th>Referred Me To</th>
<th>Check back for Kain email by</th>
<th>Follow-Ups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabrera</td>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Shoes Alive</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Director, Sandals</td>
<td>634-555-1195</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cabrera@shoesalive.com">cabrera@shoesalive.com</a></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>11/13/12</td>
<td>Harold</td>
<td>Annie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhanson</td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Green Farms Surplus</td>
<td>Organic Herbs</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
<td>792-555-4675</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bhanson@gfs.org">bhanson@gfs.org</a></td>
<td>Y and Y</td>
<td>10/24/12</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Burrowes</td>
<td>Bronson</td>
<td>Kain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheahan</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Sterling Plus</td>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>Manager, Asia region</td>
<td>202-555-5174</td>
<td><a href="mailto:xtc34@yahoo.com">xtc34@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>Y and Y</td>
<td>10/26/12</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Fields</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabra</td>
<td>Xi</td>
<td>Sterling Plus</td>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>Manager, Asia region</td>
<td>202-555-5174</td>
<td><a href="mailto:xtc34@yahoo.com">xtc34@yahoo.com</a></td>
<td>Y and Y</td>
<td>10/26/12</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Fields</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The sample chart includes some additional columns that are not explicitly mentioned in the text, such as Sent TQ email, Meeting or Call Date, Referred By, Referred Me To, Check back for Kain email by, and Follow-Ups.
Informational Interviews

Once you have a date set for your informational interview, how do you make sure it goes smoothly? Here is a break-down of different stages of a 30-minute info interview and what is involved at each one.

Stages of an Info Interview:

• Rapport Building
• Personal introduction, career summary
• Questions and conversation
• Closing: referrals and thank-you

Rapport building is breaking the ice and establishing a connection. Greet the person warmly and make eye contact while shaking hands. Thank them for taking the time to meet with you. If referred by a mutual contact, mention that person and perhaps how you met them. State your objective for the meeting eg. to learn more about the company, department, industry, field etc. in addition to hearing about the person’s own position and career and get their perspective on your search. 5 minutes.

The personal introduction is a chance for you to share your branding message and briefly present your marketing plan. Keep it short and segue into the questions, since your goal is to hear from them! 3-4 minutes.

Questions are the bulk of the info interview and we recommend you take a written list to which you can easily refer to guide the conversation. You may want to cover industry trends, business issues, company needs and challenges, skills and experience and your contact’s career track. 15-20 minutes.

Closing the meeting on time will boost your credibility, so keep your time limit promise. Ask for the person’s business card and offer them yours. Ask for referrals and leads. Offer sincere thanks for the time, advice and information. 3-5 minutes.

Following are some sample networking questions. Feel free to customize them based on your research of the company. DO NOT ask questions to which the answers are on the company website or otherwise easily found online!! Instead take the opportunity to test some hypotheses you have developed and advance the conversation. In this way, you’ll gain new insights and your contact may appreciate your evident level of investment in the exchange.

You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.
—NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

Sample Info Interview Questions
1. How did you break into this field?
2. What skills and experience are important to succeed in this field?
3. Where do you see a person with my skills and experience fit in this industry?
4. What are the opportunities within the industry for someone with my background in ___?
5. What are the career opportunities with this type of background?
6. What problems or needs exist within the industry?
7. What is a typical career path?
8. What are the requirements to fulfill these types of jobs? eg. education, training, experience etc.
9. What are the most necessary skills for this job?
10. What are the largest obstacles I would face in this field?
11. Who are the leaders in this field?
12. What trends do you see?
13. What are the threats to the industry?
14. How is your company positioned within the industry?
15. What types of positions exist within the organization that utilize the type of background I have?
16. What problems do these positions solve for your organization?
17. What would be your advice for someone considering this field?
18. How should I prepare for a job interview in this field?
19. Which professional associations/publications do you recommend?
20. Given my background, what other fields, industries or companies should I be considering?
21. Who else should I talk to? May I have his/her contact information? I would be happy to reach out directly and let them know that you referred me. (Then ask for another!)

*Career Changer Questions*

22. My current career is ______________________. How easy or difficult do you think it might be to make a transition from that career to your career?
23. The skills I use the most in my current career are _________________. To what extent and in what ways do you think those skills are transferable to your career?
24. What aspects of my background do you feel would be the most helpful in making the transition to your career field?
25. What aspects of my background do you feel would be the biggest obstacles to someone making the transition to your career field?
26. What skills needed in your career field do you think someone in my current career might be lacking and might need to develop?
27. Knowing what you know about your field and what I would have to do to get into it, would you make the change if you were me? If not, can you suggest more appropriate fields?

*Follow-Up*

After an informational meeting or phone call, it is advisable to take the following steps within 24 hours:

1. Send an email thanking the person for their time. Mention specific elements of the conversation that were helpful to you.
2. Send a hard-copy thank-you note in the mail. It can say something similar to the thank-you email and should include your business card or your preferred contact info.
3. Send a personalized invitation to join your LinkedIn network. See Social Media Section.

It would courteous and strategic to stay in touch with your new contacts, beyond the first conversation. Keep them updated on your search, including any shifts you make in direction or new target companies for which you are seeking contacts. If you learned of a personal interest the person enjoys eg. cross-country skiing or astronomy, take the opportunity to send them a related news link or feature story when you come across it in your reading. This can be an informal way to keep the connection fresh.
THANK-YOU NOTES

Sending thank-you notes after making new connections will distinguish you from many others who request info interviews, but then do not think to recognize the generosity of those who gave their time.

Here is a sample thank-you note that can also be used for the email thank-you.

Hard-copy Thank-You Card Sample

Dear Lisa,

Thanks so much for making the time to meet with me this morning. It was especially helpful to hear about your department’s transition since the merger. I hope the rest of the integration goes smoothly. I have reached out to Susan and Edward, per your recommendation, and look forward to connecting with them soon. All the best with your presentation to the VP next week!

Sincerely,
George

George Wang
grw2543@psu.edu

Be sure to keep a small stash of thank-you cards and stamps handy so that you can send one out within 24 hours of your meeting. You may not have the business card or street address of the contact if you did not meet in person. In that case, do some online research to find the office address for their firm in the location where the person is based. Places you may find it are: the company website, www.whitepages.com or www.google.com. Remember to send an email thank-you as well!

I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks.
—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
Business Cards

Every student seeking an internship or full-time role should have Smeal business cards printed. Even students sponsored by companies would benefit from having business cards available. They’re helpful to have early on when you’re getting to know your peers and building relationships with Alumni Advisory Board members and guest speakers. In the Implementation section we’ll cover networking events and other events where the cards may come in handy. In the first few weeks of the fall term, MBAA will communicate instructions on how to complete online orders for business cards.

Tips on Business Cards:
- NEVER run out of business cards. If you only have 20 left in the box, order more.
- Make sure your card lists all current information. It’s tacky to cross out things on your card.
- Carry business cards with you every day. You never know who you’ll meet.
- Keep your cards in a card holder so they stay clean and flat. A small one will fit in your pocket.
- At networking events, it can be helpful to keep your own cards in one pocket and those you receive in the other pocket, so you don’t end up giving away someone else’s card.
- Store some cards in the portfolio you take to meetings, so they’re always ready.

Receiving Business Cards
- When given a card, read it immediately.
- If in a meeting, put the card on the table, not into your pocket.
- Don’t write on the card while you’re meeting with the giver.
- It’s ok to make notes on the back of the card later to help you remember the person.
- The key to remember: treating the card respectfully reflects your respect for the person.
Social Media
Now that you’re in a job search, you need to be especially aware of social media and how to use it.

According to a 2011 Forbes article by Susan Adams:

- More than 90% of employers are currently or will soon be using social media in their hiring efforts.
- 70% of employers check social media profiles of applicants.
- 66% have filled a job using social media.
- 35% of employers have eliminated candidates from the pool based on on-line information.

To see how you appear online, do a search on yourself. Here are some tips from (http://claimid.com/bestpractices):

- Use quotes eg. “Emily Giacomini”
- Search all of your names, with spelling variations eg. “Emilie Giacomini” “Emily J. Giacomini”
- Search your User IDs
- Search on various engines eg. Google, Yahoo!, MSN Search, Bing, Teoma, Metacrawler, Clusty, Alexa, A9, Pipl, Dogpile, ASK.com
- Track Yourself on Google Alerts

If you find negative content you can bury it by generating more positive content (blogging, writing articles etc.) Other options include contacting the source or the search engine to request edits/removal.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the place to be. Whether you are looking for work or maintaining visibility in your industry as you manage a developing career. As of March 2012, over 161 million people have LinkedIn profiles and recruiters use LinkedIn heavily to identify candidates with the skills their clients need.

Setting Up Your Profile
Here are some guidelines to maximize your visibility and make a positive impression on employers.

General Guidelines

- Get your profile to 100% (look to the bar on right to see which parts you’re missing.)
- Before you edit your profile, go to Settings and make your profile Private. When you are finished, go back and make your profile Public. In this way, your LinkedIn connections will receive just one alert once the new and improved profile is ready to be seen!
- Customize the URL to your name to be more easily found online.
- Have a professional photo taken and use it. Dress well, face forward and smile!
- Create a catchy “Headline” saying what benefit you bring to an organization.
- Include a key-word loaded paragraph that highlights your skills and accomplishments, related to what you want to do next!
- Your profile must support, not contradict, your resume and other marketing materials.

Skills & Expertise

- List at least 15-20 skills in this section, including both hard/technical skills eg. Financial Accounting, Microsoft Excel, and soft skills eg. Team-Building, Conflict Resolution.
- Select phrasing that is recognized in the industry/function you are targeting so that potential recruiters/employers can find you and quickly relate to what you are offering.
Recommendations
• Request recommendations from past supervisors, peers, direct reports and clients, as well as from the highest level people in the organization who are familiar with your work.
• Offer to write recommendations for people whose work you know well and with whom you feel comfortable being linked.
• Ideally, your profile will not include any mutual recommendations as recruiters have been known to discount the validity of their content.

Groups and Associations
• Join alumni groups of your prior universities, colleges and employers.
• Join professional associations affiliated with your fields of interest.
• Search for additional groups based on your professional interests.
• Advantages of joining include in some cases the ability to “in-mail” fellow group members.
• Being actively involved in a group by posting articles and asking or answering questions can serve to raise your visibility as an expert in the field and further solidify your branding.

Maximizing Your Use of LinkedIn
Find contacts at your target companies: Type the name of your target company in the search bar. If you have any 1st level contacts working at your target firm, it makes sense to reach out to them with a customized version of the sample/target notes included in the Planning section. If you have 2nd level connections at the company, we recommend you send an email to your 1st level or mutual connection, explain that you’d like to do an info interview with the person and request that person’s email.

Email Sample to 1st Level Contact requesting email for 2nd Level Contact

Subject: Request for contact info: Sarah Stone

Hi Raj,

Hope you are well and enjoying the beautiful fall leaves. Since starting my 2nd year of Smeal’s MBA program I am busy with classes and my job search is in full swing.

I noticed you’re connected to Sarah Stone on LinkedIn. I would very much appreciate an info interview with her, not to ask for a job, but to learn about her work at VideoCorp and the viral market analysis industry, which is an area that intrigues me. Would you mind passing along Sarah’s contact info? I would be happy to reach out directly and let her know you referred me.

Hope to see you at the National Marketers’ Conference next month.

Thanks in advance,
Joshua Underwood
MBA Class of 2013

The advantage of requesting the 2nd level’s contact info is that you can reach out directly. It also saves time for your 1st level contact, who is relieved of reaching out to them, then getting back to you. While LinkedIn has a “Get Introduced” feature, using it can take longer than via email to hear back from your connection when using it, as not everyone checks his/her LinkedIn inbox frequently.
Join Groups
When you are in the same group as a potential contact, it can be easier to reach out to them through LinkedIn, so make sure you’re in key groups relevant to your target search fields, functions, geographies.

Find Jobs
Go to the Jobs tab on LinkedIn to search for matches. Some employers only post on LinkedIn and the system has become much more robust over the past few years. Take advantage of it!

Twitter
Twitter is a place where more and more employers are posting jobs. Sign up for a free account and use your real name so people can easily find and “follow” you.

Image Source: mnn.com

Here is a quick list of tips:

- @emilygiacomini — @ signifies a user name
- # is a hashtag; use before searchable terms
- Many people tweet their blogs, they love retweets (RT) and positive comments
- Don’t just comment, READ the BLOGS first!
- Aggregators make Twitter easier, such as Tweetdeck and Hootsuite

Facebook
While you may think of Facebook as a place to connect with friends, it can also enhance your job search.

Image Source: honeynet.org

A simple way to get out the word on Facebook is to write a Note with:
- Background qualifications
- What you’re seeking
- Target companies
- Request for contacts, ideas

A Note will last longer than a post, so it’s a better move for that reason.
Never share your password with a recruiter and please let us know if you are ever asked to do so.
Alumni

Penn State boasts over 500,000 alumni globally, so make yourself familiar with the avenues for crossing paths with them. Several of the websites below are also available to you from this pathway:

Home > Career > Implementation > Penn State Alumni

**Alumni Advisory Board:** You will have a chance to get a mentor on the Board and develop a relationship.


**Alumni Directory “Penn State’s Pride”:**

The MBA Program will pay your membership in the Penn State Alumni Association.

*Link:* [http://alumni.psu.edu/](http://alumni.psu.edu/)

Your membership will provide access to the searchable database of Penn State Alumni, who are great sources of market information and networking contacts.


**Alumni Chapters:** Join an active chapter in the geography you’re targeting and attend events!

*Link:* [http://www.alumni.psu.edu/groups/chapters](http://www.alumni.psu.edu/groups/chapters). Smeal also has regional clubs in the DC metro area, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

**Nittany Lion Alumni Recruiting:**

The Penn State Alumni Association’s online recruiting tool enables you to search for job, post a resume, and participate in on-campus recruiting. Students can access the site using the Penn State Access Account ID (xyz123).

*Link:* [http://www.alumni.psu.edu/career/recruiting](http://www.alumni.psu.edu/career/recruiting)

**Smeal Alumni Relations Office:** Here you’ll find out more about the ways in which you can connect with Smeal alumni.

*Link:* [http://www.smeal.psu.edu/alumni](http://www.smeal.psu.edu/alumni)

**Pathway:** Home > Career > Implementation > Networking

*Link:* [http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/implementation/networking](http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/implementation/networking)
**Dress for Success**

The first thing people notice about you is your physical appearance. How you dress is part of your brand. Studies show that many recruiters decide within the first few minutes of seeing you how likely it is you’ll get the job. How you dress affects their perception enormously. Here we’ll take a look at the two most common dress styles and when each is appropriate.

**BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL**

Business professional is worn to interviews, Info Sessions and Career Fairs and some work places.

**Men**

- Classic-cut, solid color navy or dark gray suit of wool or wool blend.
- Long-sleeve dress shirt – typically white or blue.
- Tie that is a solid color or simple repeating pattern. Red is a common choice.
- Leather belt, not visibly worn out.
- Suit needs to fit well. Trouser cuffs should break at shoe tops and in the back, hit mid-way down the back of shoe. When standing, 1/8 to 1/4 inch of shirt cuff should show past the end of the jacket.
- Conservative, leather, black, laced, shoes. Avoid slip-on shoes.
- Socks should be dark and match shoes and/or suit in color.
- Little or no jewelry.
- A shower, deodorant and light aftershave are sufficient. Avoid cologne.
- Neat, recently-cut hair style, trimmed above collar. Wear long hair pulled back from your face.
- Shave or trim facial hair. If your beard or mustache is not full, it’s better to shave it off!
- Neatly trimmed nails.
- Portfolio or brief case.

**Women**

- Suit (black, navy or charcoal gray). Conservative employers consider skirt suits more professional than pant suits. In manufacturing plants, note that skirts may not be allowed on production floor.
- Skirt should fall at or just above the knee.
- White, off-white or light blue cotton or silk blouse with conservative neckline and buttons.
- Low to medium heeled, closed toe leather shoes.
- Neutral pantyhose.
- Conservative, limited jewelry. One ring per hand, at most. Gold is more professional than silver.
- Light make up and little to no perfume.
- Neat hair style with hair pulled back from face.
- Neatly manicured nails with conservative, if any, color. No chipped polish!
- Portfolio or brief case.
Men and Women

- Cover tattoos.
- Polish your shoes.
- Watches should be classic in style, with a leather or metal band.
- In winter or inclement weather, a professional long coat in a dark color works well.
- Lay out your clothes the night before, so you know everything is ready.

**BUSINESS CASUAL**

Business Casual is worn to campus events as specified and in some office settings. It should be crisp, neat and project a professional image. A rule of thumb is that business casual is one notch down from business professional.

**Men**

- Dress pants, khakis, cotton pants — must be neatly creased and pressed.
- Sports jacket or blazer.
- Button down shirt, short or long-sleeves.
- Leather belt.
- Black or brown leather shoes.
- Socks matching pants or shoes.

**Women**

- Dress pants, khakis, cotton pants — must be neatly creased and pressed.
- Coordinated cardigan sweater or jacket.
- Skirts and dresses at or just above the knee are appropriate.
- Collared shirts or sweater sets are appropriate.
- Dress shoes, boots, flats and closed-toes shoes are suitable.

**Men and Women**

- All clothes should be clean, pressed and fit well — neither too tight nor too baggy.
- Avoid jeans and cut-offs.
- Avoid shirts with logos, writing, slogans or pictures.
- Cover tattoos.
- No sneakers or flip flops.

Pathway: Home > Career > Implementation > Professional Etiquette

Link: http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/implementation/professional-etiquette

Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important.

— JANET LANE
Career Fairs

Career fairs are well worth the time! Benefits include the opportunity to meet face-to-face with recruiters, ask intelligent questions about the company and market, establish your brand, start a relationship with a company representative and network with other candidates. We recommend fairs sponsored by Penn State at Smeal and the Bryce Jordan Center, as well as nationally-sponsored career fairs. Many fairs happen in September and October so it’s best to get them on your calendar early.

How can you make your Career Fair visit a success? Follow these tips to become a natural in no time.

- Select 20+ companies to target and research them eg. history, products, mergers, competitors.
- Prepare your branding message and questions to ask recruiters.
- Dress professionally: 55% of impression is non-verbal.
- Make a plan: observe lay-out and location of your targets, warm up on your 2nd level choices.
- Be ready with answers to these frequent questions: Tell me about yourself; Why are you interested in our company? or Why are you here today?; Why have you chosen this career?
- Closing impressions: Ask for recruiter’s business card and inquire about next steps.
- Follow-up: send a thank-you to company contacts within 24 hours and include your resume.

We look forward to seeing you at our Career Fair workshops for many more detailed ways to prepare.

Pathway: Home > Career > Implementation > Career Fairs
Link: http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/implementation/career-fairs

Info Sessions

Information sessions come in many shapes and sizes. We’ll address the most common types and some variations. These events are an opportunity for you to meet with potential employers, learn about the company and make a great first impression or continue the relationship and increase your chances of being invited to interview or join the company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Info Session at a Glance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time of Day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Representatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dress Code</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally the representatives will make a presentation on the company, followed by questions and answers, with time for networking before and after the presentation.
Tips

- Research the company before you come.
- Talk to a 2nd year student who interned at the company.
- Prepare some questions and write them down in the portfolio you plan to bring.
- Arrive early to greet the presenters and introduce yourself.
- Have business cards ready. Offer yours and ask if you might have one of theirs.
- It’s never acceptable to run out of business cards.
- If there’s food, don’t eat until you’ve been invited to do so.
- A quick bathroom trip to check for food in your teeth before introducing yourself to anyone could pay off. The focus is on connecting with the company, so don’t come starving for food!
- If you’re not attending the session, do not eat the food you see inside or outside the room.
- Ask intelligent questions during/after the presentation, based on research and new info.
- Follow-up with a hand-written and email thank-you to each company rep with whom you speak.

Variations

- The info session may be for 1st years, as many companies hire full-time only from intern pools.
- The session may indicate a functional focus, but usually not to the exclusion of other functions, so if not in the area being addressed you may still get company info and make valuable contacts.
- Some companies hold info sessions on the lawn, at Nittany Lion Inn, or even at a bowling alley!
- Companies sometimes hold video conference info sessions.

Tailgate Parties

Tailgates are a unique networking opportunity. These are parties held just before home football games near the stadium at University Park. Smeal MBA tailgates are usually sponsored by the MBAA and sometimes by a company. Dress is casual, often jeans and sweatshirts or football jerseys. Some students prefer polo shirts, but anything more fancy would be odd. Have your business cards ready. It’s crucial that you introduce yourself to any alumni there. Be cautious of huddling together with other students and not approaching alumni who make the effort to come. This is especially true when the tailgate is a company-sponsored event. Practice your branding message aloud before you come. Include your name, concentration and recent work and intersperse these tidbits in the early parts of a conversation. As in any networking scenario, the key is to show interest in the other person. Most people love talking about themselves, so ask questions about their work and interests. Even if you’re not interested in working for the sponsoring company, you may generate networking contacts at the tailgate who could connect you to your ideal company, so come prepared.

A word on alcohol: most tailgate parties serve alcohol. Please note that glass bottles are not allowed at tailgates on campus. It’s socially acceptable to have a beer, but not liquor, at a school-sponsored tailgate party. Importantly, don’t over-drink! Employers are watching to see how you act in public and determine whether they’d want to have you representing the firm to its high-level clients.
Job Applications
Here are answers to a few common questions students may have when completing applications.

- Be honest. Several C-suite executives have lost their jobs when it was found they lied on their resume or in their application. If you have to misrepresent yourself to get the job, it’s not a fit.
- Complete all the sections of the application. If there’s an opportunity to elaborate on your skills, awards, etc., take advantage of it to best represent your qualities as they relate to the posting.
- Use lots of keywords that are popular in the industry.
- Always include a cover letter, unless the instructions specifically request you do not.
- If asked for former salary, answer honestly.
- If asked for a desired salary range, research the range and choose a middle-of-the-range amount.
- If asked about a criminal record and you have one, be honest. Some employers will still consider your application, but might not if you decline to answer initially and they learn about it later.
- Contact the recruiter/hiring manager 5 business days after applying to express interest and articulate your qualifications.
- Always network to build relationships and grow the chance the application turns to an interview.

Pathway: Home > Career > Planning > Job Search Tools > Job Search Engines
Link: http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/planning/job-search-tools-1/job-search-engines
**Interviewing**

Interviewing is a skill. It is a learned skill and anyone can be successful with preparation, practice and a positive mindset. Interviews are a natural part of the recruiting and selection process and a necessary means to an end—a job or internship offer.

*Consultant’s approach*

Consider approaching the interview process as a consultant would approach a client. Part of a candidate’s mental make-up should be to uncover and clarify an employer’s needs (problems,) communicate how you can meet those needs (solutions) and facilitate an easy decision for the employer. As we’ve stated earlier, your resume is a sales and marketing tool. Interviews are a sales and marketing process.

As the seller in this process, you possess features and benefits. Your features are your skills, subject matter expertise, personal qualities and experience. Your benefits are your accomplishments, the outcomes that you have produced in previous experience. Interviewing is simply a process of determining the best match.

**INTERVIEW PREP**

Unsuccessful interviews can be traced to lack of preparation, rather than lack of qualifications. This section will walk you through a number of interview preparation steps. Make them a part of your interview prep “checklist” to ensure your success.

*Know your resume*

This may seem like an obvious preparation step, but don’t overlook its importance. Savvy recruiters will conduct a “resume walk” asking you to “walk me through your resume.” You must be aware of your career chronology: your progression of employers, positions and dates. If you customized your resume for a particular job posting, make sure you know which accomplishments you included on that version. If you had employment gaps or a lack of continuity in your career path, a recruiter will exploit those; be prepared to explain the reasons.

*Conduct your research*

Employers want to know what you know about them. There is no substitute for company research. Your knowledge of the company, its history, products, customers, competitors, management style, turnover, and financial outlook will differentiate you from lesser prepared candidates. The additional benefit is the knowledge you have to make an informed decision when you are presented with an offer or multiple offers. Based on your research, complete the Company Data Snapshot for each interview.
### Company Data Snapshot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public or privately held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticker symbol, current stock price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company history (when founded, where, by whom)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products, services provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size (number of employees; local, company-wide)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters, locations, facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President/CEO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company's biggest challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company's business philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company culture, personality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pending or recent mergers or acquisitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three major competitors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company's position in the market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual sales last year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase or decrease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last five-year sales, earnings growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three highest growth potential business units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name and title of interviewer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number, e-mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management style, personal qualities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Map qualifications to the job requirements

Employers formulate their interview questions by assessing the skills, subject matter expertise, qualities and experience that are required to perform successfully in the job. One of the best ways to anticipate those questions is to analyze the job description or vacancy posting and prepare your accomplishment stories that best match their requirements. Use the **Requirements/Qualifications Map** below as a preparation tool for every interview. Set up a two column table, copy the job requirements into the left column and type your best accomplishments that match into the right column. This should become a standard interview prep tool and will become easier with every interview with the same or similar requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job requirements</th>
<th>My qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>Authored a report…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership ability</td>
<td>Let a 10-person team that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team building skills</td>
<td>Guided a turn-around team that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Independently developed a…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving skills</td>
<td>Resolved a system bottleneck that…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavioral questions

Behavioral interviews have become such an integral part of the interviewing process that a candidate has zero excuse for not being prepared to provide examples of typical behaviors required of the job they are interviewing for. Based on the requirements of the position, interviewers formulate “Tell me about a time” or “Give me an example” questions to draw out specific situations where a candidate demonstrated a particular skill or competency.

This is your opportunity to articulate your accomplishments that match the required skills. Use the aforementioned two column mapping tool to identify the job requirements. Use the STAR model to craft your responses. Here is a sampling of behavioral questions. You will undoubtedly be asked many of these in interviews. Use the list to begin preparing your responses for upcoming interviews.

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone’s opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
8. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
9. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa.)
10. Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
11. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
12. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
13. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
14. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
15. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

Prepare your agenda

Employers have three concerns during the selection or recruitment process. An employer is concerned that a candidate:

“Can do” the job; do they have the skills, experience, education, subject matter expertise to perform successfully in the job?

“Will do the job;” do they have the drive, energy, motivation to perform, as well as, an interest in the company?

“How fit” is a candidate for the existing company or business unit culture?

If those are an employer’s concerns, your response to those concerns is your collection of assets. Your interview agenda is to allay those concerns by performing a comprehensive self-assessment, and to articulate examples or stories of when you have of demonstrated those assets in the past. Take a look at the next model:
Here are some common questions that you should be prepared to answer at career fairs and interviews:

1. Tell me a little about yourself (also treat this one as your “commercial.”)
2. Walk me through your resume.
3. What are your short and long term career goals?
4. Why did you return for your MBA and why Smeal?
5. Describe your three greatest strengths.
6. What is your greatest weakness?
7. Do you work better by yourself or as a member of a team?
8. Describe a situation where you demonstrated good communications skills.
9. What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?
10. What would your previous supervisor say about you….both positive and negative?
11. Describe a confrontation you've had with a supervisor. Who was wrong and why?
12. Describe a situation where you made a mistake. How did you handle it and what was the result?
13. Tell me about an unsuccessful team of which you were a member?
14. Describe a situation where you had to deal with an ethical issue on the job; what did you do, what was the outcome?
15. What's the difference between a manager and a leader?
16. Provide an example of your leadership ability.
17. What have you done to develop your leadership skills?
18. Provide an example of when you asserted yourself in a high-pressure or emergency situation.
19. What decisions are the easiest for you to make and which are hardest?
20. Why should I hire you?
Prepare and practice your branding message

“Tell me about yourself.” This is a typical interview request and one that you must be prepared to answer in a concise, well-prepared manner. Sometimes referred to as your “elevator pitch,” or 60-second commercial, your branding message articulates your professional identity, conveys your potential value and expresses your skills, subject matter expertise (SME), experience and personal qualities. Refer to the template below to craft an impressive branding message.

My name is (name) and I’m currently a (MBA candidate at Smeal College of Business) with a concentration in (concentration.)

Most recently I’ve been a (position/title/role) at (name of business or organization) where I (primary job function or work you performed), (primary job function or work you performed) and (primary job function). I am particularly proud of (state a notable or relevant accomplishment, project or assignment) where I (state outcome, result or deliverable.)

My previous experience includes: (state a prior tenure with a company, military experience, notable volunteer experience, relevant education. It is not, however, necessary to state a chronology of all previous jobs.)

I find that wherever I’ve worked or whatever role I’ve been in, I bring three key strengths to the table: strong (strength), excellent (strength) and an ability to (strength.)

My goal is to obtain a internship/position in (functional area) within the (industry preference.)

Put it all together:

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

Prepare questions to ask

It is customary when an interview has concluded her/his questions to ask, “What questions do you have for me?” This is your opportunity to demonstrate your interest, preparedness and a “consultants approach.” Questions help you understand the employer’s needs, assess job and employer “fit” and build a relationship with the interviewer to establish a give and take conversation. Base your questions on your research findings, performance factors, job requirements, values match and company culture. Focus your questions on uncovering business problems, the company’s “pain points” and gaps in competencies where you may be able to contribute. Develop eight to ten “high yield” questions. The list below will get you started:

- What are some of the problems that keep you up at night?
- What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- What would be a positive thing the new person could do in first 90 days?
- What challenges might I encounter if I were fortunate to be offered this position?
- What are your major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this job?
- What do you see as the most important opportunities for improvement in this department?
- What are the attributes of the job that you’d like to see improved?
- Are there any weaknesses in the department that you are particularly looking to improve?
• How does the reporting structure work here? What are the preferred means of communication?
• What is the most pressing business issue or problem for the company or department?
• How would you describe your own management style?
• How does the company support and promote personal and professional growth?
• How would my performance be evaluated? What are the top criteria you use? What percentage of my compensation is based on my performance?

MANAGING THE INTERVIEW

Anatomy of the interview
Although two interviews are never the same, you should be prepared for a typical interview sequence which contains four stages:

Rapport stage—this is a “getting to know you” phase, sometimes an icebreaker period where the interviewer is forming first impressions, gauging nervousness and likeability. This period may include chit chat about the traffic, weather or sports events. Be prepared for it; use it as a time to relax, show your composure and gauge the interviewer’s personality and communication style.

Questions and answers—you must be prepared for typical or common interview questions, as well as those behavioral questions discussed earlier.

• Tell me a little about yourself.
• Walk me through your resume.
• What are your short and long term career goals?
• Why did you return for your MBA and why Smeal?
• Describe your three greatest strengths.
• What is your greatest weakness?
• Do you work better by yourself or as a member of a team?
• Describe a situation where you demonstrated good communications skills.
• What’s the biggest risk you’ve ever taken?
• What would your previous supervisor say about you?

Questions for the interviewer—the interviewer will turn control of the interview over the candidate with a question like “So what questions do you have for me?” Refer to your questions that you developed in your interview preparation.

Closing—this is your opportunity to leave a lasting positive impression. Conclude the interview by asking any questions that have not been answered, summarizing your strengths, and conveying your interest in the position. Be sure you know what the next steps are in the process. Ask the interviewer for his/her business card.

Seven Cardinal Rules of Interview Questions

1. Keep your answers brief (less than 2 minutes.)
2. Stop talking when you’ve answered the question.
3. Don’t be modest (speak of your successes.)
4. Don’t exaggerate or be verbose.
5. Talk in concrete quantifiable terms about your accomplishments.
6. Never defend or argue.
7. Look for ways to connect with your interviewer (genuinely.)
Manage first impressions
During the Rapport stage, impressions, fairly or unfairly, are made by the interviewer that can influence the remainder of the interview. Here are five cues to positive first impressions:

Take a breath—it delivers oxygen to the brain and relieves stress
Make eye contact—it shows confidence and respect for the interviewer
Smile—it shows likeability, confidence and builds instant rapport with the interviewer
Extend a firm handshake—it is a professional business protocol
Express a cordial greeting—“It is a pleasure to meet you…”

Manage non-verbals
According to a study by US Educational Psychologist, Albert Mehrabian, only 7% of communication comes from content, our spoken words, 38% is from the tone of the voice and the confidence projected, and 55% comes from non-verbals. This includes:

- Stance – open or closed
- Facial expressions
- Clothes
- Mannerisms
- Eye contact
- Handshake
- Grooming

A practice interview with a member of the Career Services team will greatly improve your interview skills and provide an opportunity to receive feedback on your interview non-verbals.

Managing negative questions
Questions about weaknesses, projects that missed deadlines, conflicts with team members should be expected. Possible negative questions include:

- What are your weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time when you failed…
- Tell me about a project that you worked on that failed…
- Tell me about a time when you wish you had acted differently…
- Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a colleague…
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss…

The P/N/P model suggests that you start with a positive statement, discuss the negative behavior/experience in the middle, then finish with what you learned from this/ how you resolved it / how you are managing it.

Example: Tell me about a time you had conflict with a team member.

(Positive) “While normally I have excellent relationships with all members of my team, I had one situation in a team meeting (Negative) where John and I had a pretty intense argument about how we should proceed on a project. John and I agreed to meet privately and discuss our differences. We both realized that we were passionate about this project but had different views on next steps and implementation. (Positive) We each made some concessions, brought our ideas back to the team and completed our project. I learned that compromise is a good team skill and to hear the ideas of other team members improves team performance.”
POST INTERVIEW

De-brief the interview
While the interview is still fresh, take a few minutes to replay the interaction and conversations in your mind. Make notes in your car or private area, lobby area or coffee shop. What went right? With what questions did I have difficulty? Where did I “tap dance?” What should I be better prepared for next time? Do I need to do more company research? Remember, every interview is preparation for the next one.

Follow-up
In a recent online survey, just 40% of job seekers send a thank-you message after an interview. In the same survey, 80% of employers who responded, expect a thank you message from job candidates. A post interview follow-up is courteous, professional and gives you one more opportunity to make a connection with your interviewer. Below are five good reasons for you to send a thank-you email, letter or note.

• Repeat your interest in the position
• Remind the interviewer of you
• Reinforce your key strengths
• Reiterate an agreed-upon action
• Refer to a point not mentioned

Make your thank-you message personal; relate the content to topics discussed in the interview. If you met with multiple interviewers, you should send a thank you to everyone. They share thank-you notes, so customize each note.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS
Screening interviews—usually conducted by an HR representative, and as the name implies, they are intended to screen out most of the candidate pool. Expect “can do” questions about experience, skills, education, job or industry knowledge and accomplishments. This is typically a 30 to 45 minute telephone interview. Body language is not a factor in a phone interview so project confidence, energy and interest in your voice. Your goal is to move on to the next round.

Panel interviews—conducted by potential colleagues or team members. Fit or chemistry is a genuine consideration in this type of interview. “Can we work with this person?” How compatible will this candidate be with the rest of our team?” When responding to a panelist’s question, direct your response to the questioner, but be certain to include the other panel members in your view.

On some occasions, it may be the role of a panel member to be an antagonist. He/she may try to create conflict, or become hostile or disagreeable. This tactic is employed to see how you handle conflict within a team and to create peer pressure. Your goal is to diffuse the conflict; express your point of view while not escalating the level of emotion.

Sequential interviews—often thought of as a day-long marathon, these may be a combination of individual interviews and small panel interviews. When you schedule the interview, be sure to ask for the agenda for the day. Are you scheduling one 11am interview with Bill Jones, or a 9am with Bill Jones, a 10am with Sue Smith, an 11am with Fred Adams and Noon lunch with all three?

Be prepared to be asked some of the same questions in each interview. As with any interview, research each interviewer on LinkedIn in advance. Know his/her area of responsibility and how you might interact with each. Prepare an individual set of questions for each interviewer.

These can be a drain on energy levels. Be certain to have a nutritional breakfast, and drink fluids during the interview process.
Case Interviews

It used to be that only students keen on becoming consultants needed to learn how to do case interviews. However, over the past year or two more of our students and recruiters have let us know that case interviewing is used not only by consulting firms, but also by other potential employers looking to hire students in finance, supply chain, marketing and even leadership rotational programs. In short, you may want to familiarize yourself with the case interview process to be prepared for such interviews.

It’s important to note that companies using case interviews have not abandoned behavioral interviews, which were addressed earlier in the Implementation section.

WHAT is a case interview?
A case interview is a structured process in which students encounter a business problem and apply their analytical and reasoning skills to develop and present to the interviewer a rational recommendation.

WHY do companies use case interviews?
• To observe your thought process
• To test your ability to think logically and arrive at your answer
• To probe your tolerance for ambiguity
• To assess your poise, self-confidence and communication….under pressure!

HOW should I prepare for case interviews?
To prepare for case interviews, understand their typical format, be familiar with frameworks that may help you solve them, watch others do case interviews and practice them unceasingly with many people.

The Case Process
1. LISTEN as the interviewer outlines the business problem and take notes.
2. Review information with interviewer and verify you have understood the objective(s).
3. Request permission and then take one minute to structure the problem on the page.
4. Ask clarifying questions, to get missing information necessary to arriving at a solution.
5. Walk through the Framework with the interviewer, explaining your logic.
   • Be coachable
   • Be creative
   • Structure, structure, structure
   • Exude enthusiasm – be positive
   • Explain the implications of the case
   • Make a recommendation, using numbers whenever possible

Throughout the process, manage your time well! Be prepared for the interviewer to keep your pages for their evaluation and records.

A word on frameworks:
• They help you organize your thoughts and analyze a case in a logical manner.
• They help you develop a thinking pattern.
• They are NOT direct solutions to any case.
If you are invited to do a case interview over the phone:

- Test your phone
- Exude enthusiasm
- Over-explain the math
- Constantly refer to your structure
- Carry on as usual

There are many subtleties to be mastered in case interviewing. We strongly recommend that students who anticipate doing case interviews join the MBA Consulting Association, attend any relevant workshops offered by Career Services, read the Case Interview Guide Book on the Exchange plus references included in the guide, and practice case interviews for several hours to become proficient.

Pathway: Home > Career > Implementation > Case Interview
Link: http://mbastudents.smeal.psu.edu/career-services/implementation/case-interview

Negotiation

You have reached that much sought-after phase in the process where an employer has extended an employment offer for a job or internship. It is important to understand the relationships at play when an employer makes an offer. The company wants to make a profit and minimize expenses; the candidate wants to earn a competitive compensation package. However, good employers are also seeking good talent and see talent as an investment. In addition, candidates are seeking opportunities to contribute their skills and talents. The long and short of the negotiation phase is to view the process as a win-win opportunity rather than a confrontational game of win-lose.

Many candidates fail to prepare for salary negotiation and many more fail to negotiate but merely accept an offer as extended. Keep in mind — the first offer is not the best offer.

Employers expect a candidate to negotiate; respectfully and professionally. Negotiation is a job skill and you will demonstrate that skill for the first time when you negotiate your offer package. In a leadership role you will negotiate for time, additional resources, extended deadlines and concessions from vendors and suppliers. Throughout your business career, you will negotiate with upper level managers, customers, vendors and external third parties.

**THE SEVEN-STEP NEGOTIATION PROCESS**

1. Establish your options
2. Participate in interviews
3. Receive the offer
4. Request evaluation time
5. Evaluate the offer
6. Negotiate
7. Accept the offer

The mind is wondrous. It starts the second you’re born and doesn’t stop until you get a case question.

—Marc P. Cosentino
ESTABLISH YOUR OPTIONS

Before you begin the interview process, establish your compensation package options. Give thought to your “walkaway” figure; the minimum you would accept. Use the Establish Your Negotiation Options worksheet to determine your priorities:

Establish Your Negotiation Options

Non-monetary
• Start date
• Reporting relationship
• Job scope
• Timing of performance review

Basic Compensation
• Base salary
• Commissions
• Profit sharing
• Performance bonus/incentives
• Cost of living adjustment
• Overtime
• Signing bonus
• Cash in lieu of benefits

Health Benefits
• Medical insurance
• Dental insurance
• Vision insurance
• Prescription package
• Life insurance
• Accidental death and disability insurance

Vacation and Time Issues
• Vacation time
• Sick days
• Personal time
• Holidays
• Flex-time
• Compensatory time
• Family leave

Retirement-oriented Benefits
• 401(k) plan
• Savings plan
• Stock purchase plan
• Stock options

Education
• Tuition reimbursement
• Professional continuing education

Perquisites
• Cell phone
• Company car or vehicle allowance
• Expense account
• Child care
• Professional association memberships
• Athletic club memberships
• Laptop

Relocation Expenses
• Direct moving expenses
• Trips to find suitable housing
• Housing cost differential between cities
• Temporary dual housing
• Trips during dual housing
• Utilities hookup

Work from Home Expenses
• Personal computer
• Internet access
• Copier
• Printer
• Separate phone line

Let us never negotiate out of fear. But, let us never fear to negotiate.
—JOHN F. KENNEDY
PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEWS

Your negotiation with an employer starts with your first interaction. In each contact with a recruiter, human resources, hiring manager and potential peers, you are communicating your value, benefits and performance potential; you are also being evaluated for the same assets. In the negotiation process, two parties bring something to the table. With every step that you advance during the recruitment process, an employer sees greater and greater value in you.

Accomplishments convey value

When using the STAR model to formulate your accomplishments, stating your results is critical. If a candidate has had a track record of increasing revenues, reducing costs or improving work processes, these show value to an employer and pave the way for win-win salary negotiations. Be sure that when providing accounts of your accomplishments, you include the results, and quantify them whenever possible.

Know your market value

For many candidates, handling the salary question in interviews can be difficult. In step one, you established your options. In step two, you must know your market value through research before you can be comfortable discussing salary expectations in interviews. Excellent resources for researching salary are:

- Salary.com
- Glassdoor.com
- Payscale.com
- Jobstar.org
- Salaryexpert.com

Managing the salary question

Once you have established the competitive range for positions you are seeking, it is much easier to discuss salary expectations.

Below are three strategies and accompanying scripts that will help you answer the question, “What are your salary expectations?”

Defer

“I would prefer to learn more about the position and how I could contribute to your team before discussing salary.”

or

“I would like to defer discussing salary until after I am able to provide a better picture of how my skills and experiences meet your requirements.”

Toss back

“You have a reputation for paying a competitive salary. I expect to fit within your range. Can you tell me what it is for this position? “

or

“Based upon my qualifications, where do you see me fitting within your range?”

A ballpark range

“Based upon my research for this market, I know that the range for similar positions in this industry is from $xxx to $xxx, and this is well within my expectations.”

With a toss back

“And what do you have budgeted for this position?”
There are many schools of thought among career professionals regarding which strategy is best. You must decide what you feel most comfortable articulating. It is also important to be adaptable to more than one strategy.

For example, you may feel very comfortable employing the Defer Strategy and present it with confidence, only to have a recruiter tell you are that they really want you to give them a figure. In this instance your “fall back” strategy would be to rely on your market research and to provide a wide range. Whenever discussing salary expectations, always, always speak in a range.

**RECEIVE THE OFFER**

When you receive a verbal offer, either in person or over the telephone, express your thanks and appreciation. This is critical to setting a positive tone and a win-win negotiation outcome. Confirm the position and scope of work responsibilities. It is very important to request the offer in writing before giving a verbal acceptance.

An email offer with components is appropriate. Always acknowledge an offer communicated by email or voice mail. It is a professional courtesy to inform the employer(s) of receipt, regardless of whether you intend to accept or reject an offer.

You will be making decisions about the overall compensation package so request information, i.e. benefits and employee handbook if you have not received any of those items earlier in the interviewing process. There have been countless situations, with unhappy endings, where a candidate commits to a verbal acceptance prematurely.

**REQUEST EVALUATION TIME**

There are many good reasons to request time to evaluate an offer. Time allows you the opportunity to contact other employer prospects with whom you have been interviewing, to possibly accelerate their decision, or at minimum, make them aware that you have a serious offer.

As a potential decision-maker with a company, you demonstrate logic, and measured approach by asking for time to consider all variables. You show the employer that you have the capacity to make decisions from a “high thinking” position rather than a “high emotional” position. “I’ll take it” doesn’t instill confidence in one's decision making capacity.

Here are a couple of responses for requesting evaluation time:

“How much time do I have to evaluate your offer?”

“When do you need a decision?”

Reach agreement with the hiring manager or your human resources contact on a date and time for your response. Your negotiation should typically take place with the hiring manager or decision-maker. They manage a department or program budget and have the greatest discretion for managing compensation.

---

**Cardinal Rule of Negotiation:**

*Never accept or decline a verbal offer in an interview.*

**Cardinal Rule of Negotiation:**

*The first offer is not the best offer.*

**Cardinal Rule of Negotiation:**

*Always request the initial offer in writing.*
EVALUATE THE OFFER

When you receive the offer in writing, compare the components of the offer with your compensation options that you prioritized in Step 1. Assess where there are gaps, determine your trade-offs and what you are willing to concede. Determine your walk-away figure. Develop a counter proposal or addendum to the original offer; this will become your agenda for conducting a negotiation session.

Six considerations before saying “yes”
- How were you treated?
- Is the company financially stable?
- Is the corporate personality a fit with yours?
- Do you know where you will be on the organization chart?
- What did your “personal reconnaissance” tell you?
- What is your “gut” feeling?

NEGOTIATE THE OFFER

Negotiation should take place in person with a face-to-face meeting. If this cannot be achieved, a pre-scheduled telephone conversation is a viable alternative. In general, email and texting are useful forms of communication; not, however, for negotiating with a potential employer. Begin the negotiation session by expressing thanks for the offer and by stating what components of the offer you are in agreement. This will typically account for 60% to 70% of the offer. This sets a positive and constructive tone.

When addressing components of the offer where there are differences or gaps, begin with the highest priority item first, and negotiate each item individually. Good negotiation is based on asking questions rather than making demands. “I’m wondering if there is flexibility in the salary figure?” would be a respectful and professional approach. “How can we close the gap?” shows a willingness to reach compromise.

Be prepared to offer rational to support your request. Your rational may be based on the market research you conducted, salary or signing bonus comparables of previous Smeal MBA graduates or your track record of increasing revenues, reducing costs or driving process improvements from prior experience.

Your goal in negotiation is to gain agreement. Be prepared to make concessions but also seek concessions from the prospective employer. Good negotiation is always a give-and-take conversation. Negotiation continues point-by-point until both parties agree on each item. Ask for the final offer in writing.

Cardinal Rule of Negotiation:
Obtain the final offer, with agreed upon points, in writing.

ACCEPT THE OFFER

Acceptance of an employment offer is a verbal or written affirmation of a verbal or written offer. Your word is your bond. “Yes” is a commitment to a prospective employer, so be very careful how you articulate a response to an employment offer.

Upon acceptance of an offer, all job search activities must cease.

Inform Smeal MBA Career Services of acceptance, which will prevent the Program Office from referring your resume to any future employers.

Withdraw your candidacy from any current job postings and from any scheduled campus interviews.

Notify all prospective employers still actively considering you as a candidate that you are no longer in the active job or internship market.
If you receive an offer and are not ready to accept it, you should seek counsel from Career Services/Employer Relations about how best to handle the situation. Requests of companies to extend offer decision deadlines should be made as early as possible, not on the same day as the original response deadline.

**RENEGING ON A JOB OR INTERNSHIP ACCEPTANCE**

All Smeal MBA students are expected to negotiate in good faith and to stand behind any employment decision they make with an employer. Once an employment offer is accepted (verbal or written,) it is unacceptable to continue interviewing, to continue making company site visits, or to generally pursue other job or internship opportunities.

Moreover, students who renege on an accepted offer, especially when the reason for the decision is that “a better offer surfaced,” risk damaging their network, costing jobs for current and future students, and devaluing the brand equity of their degree. Reneging on a job or internship acceptance will subject a student to Professionalism and Conduct sanctions. This situation does not happen frequently, but it is very costly to the individual, the program, and the company when it does.

**CONGRATULATIONS**

Statistically, 50% to 80% of candidates do not negotiate a job offer. By negotiating, you will have demonstrated a marketable business skill, as well as having exhibited flexibility, patience, self-confidence, preparation, problem-solving skills and an ability to manage stress.

*The Tao of Twitter* by Mark Schaeffer
*Case in Point* by Marc Cosentino
Career Management

So you landed a job in your field of interest? Congratulations! Finding fulfilling work is truly a gift.

What's next? Transitions are crucial times. In this section we offer tips on the shift into a summer internship, to maximize your chances of getting a permanent job offer from the employer. We’ll also address the move from full-time student to full-time employee during the vital “first 90 days” on the job.

Our greatest danger is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.
—MICHIELANGELO
Making Your Internship a Success

It has been said that an internship is a three-month interview; here are some tips to stay on the ball!

- Before you go, contact your supervisor to find out your project topics and research them.
- Network with 2nd Years who interned there and alumni who work there, re. business culture.
- Set your own goals — what do you want to get out of the summer?
- Ask about dress code and stay on the conservative/more dressy side, even on “casual Fridays.”
- Communicate well with your supervisor on projects, goals and deadlines. Seek feedback.
- Initiate! Suggest new projects and volunteer to get them done, within your limits.
- Grow. Ask “What industry-standard skills am I missing?” Make a written plan to get them, plus subscribe to newsletters/alerts, join a professional association, read, and get a mentor.
- Connect. Set up meetings with people in many units, bring questions, and network with alumni.
- Participate in conferences and social events, both company-sponsored and with other interns.
- Record your accomplishments: keep an open Word doc to track project activities and successes.
- Request LinkedIn recommendations from the people with whom you work.
- Have fun!
- Follow-up after the summer: send thank-you notes and LinkedIn invite
- Update your resume, using the list of accomplishments you developed “live-time.”
- Stay in touch with new connections via updates and send articles related to their interests.

Maximizing Your First 90 Days

IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Create coalitions early
- UP— boss, boss’s boss, your boss’s assistant
- ACROSS— peers, customers, clients, partners
- DOWN— direct reports, critical support staff

CONDUCT STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS (PRE-START AND FIRST 90 DAYS)

- General situation
- Strengths/competencies required
- Key priorities
- Financial, technical resources available
- How people communicate
- How decisions are made
- What’s measured and tracked: metrics, meetings, reports
- Cultural landscape: political landmines, subcultures
- Who are the informal influencers
CONDUCT HIGH PRIORITY BOSS CONVERSATIONS

Situational analysis
- Organization’s business plan
- Strategic priorities
- Biggest challenges
- Unexploited opportunities
- Cultural and political landmines

Expectations conversation
- First 30 day results
- Short-term, long term goals
- Shared priorities
- Success factors
- Performance measurements (qualifiable/quantifiable)

CONDUCT ORGANIZATIONAL DUE DILIGENCE
- Financials, market trends, share
- Customers, competitors, collaborators
- Distribution, pricing, advertising
- Promotion, packaging, products
- Operations, locations, capabilities

PRACTICE SOUND CAREER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
- Create a success journal; accomplishments log
  — Significant accomplishments
  — Goals or performance standards achieved
  — Projects you worked on or contributed to
  — Problems you solved or solutions created
  — Commendations, recognition you received
  — Training programs, seminars, workshops
- Develop an “internal campaign” strategy
- Network while you work; not when you need work
- Deploy a “continuous learner” mindset
- Join business associations and professional societies

A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.
—FRANCIS BACON
Once you've started your new role, the official job search may end, but the career management cycle never does. Companies change and opportunities end. Even if you envision staying with this company until retirement, it makes sense occasionally to do some Self-Exploration to consider how well you are doing there professionally and personally, stay aware of industry trends through Market Research and Focus on the continued fit between your values and skills and the work you are doing, to confirm or challenge whether it's the best place for you. If at that point you determine to make a shift, go through Planning your search strategy and marketing materials in preparation for Implementation and the transition to a new role that suits you better. Soon thereafter you'll begin the transition and launch into another Career Management cycle. Most of us do this naturally, but it's helpful to be aware of where you are in the process, so you can be intentional in working through it and also anticipate what's next.

In every phase of the process, we recommend you stay in touch with your networks. You could do this through the occasional email, phone call or even by meeting for coffee before or after a professional association meeting. Do what works best for you and your connections. By cultivating these relationships you'll continue to grow professionally by exchanging cutting-edge knowledge and you'll also be well-positioned to reach out for advice or introductions should you find yourself in a job search.

The Five O’Clock Club, founded by Kate Wendleton
http://www.fiveoclockclub.com/
Conclusion

You’ve reached the end of the guide, but not the end of the journey. During the course of your career you may experience six to eight job changes. As your career progresses and you achieve greater success in your career journey, continue to refer to this guide and the solid career management tools and resources developed for you. Remember, everyone needs a little coaching along the way. Much success!

Whatever you can do or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

—GOETHE
This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY. U.Ed. BUS 13-22 MPC119456